

An interview with Edward N. Howard (1)

EDWARD N. HOWARD

An Interview Conducted by  
William B. Pickett  
June 29, 1981

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# NARRATOR DATA SHEET

06/29/81

DATE

Name of narrator: Edward N. Howard

Address: 621 S. Center, Terre Haute Phone: 234-7639

Birthdate: Jan. 22, 1920 Birthplace: Carlisle, IN

Length of residence in Terre Haute: 13 years

Education: Carlisle High School; BA English, Indiana University;  
MA, Library Science, Indiana University

Occupational history: U.S. Navy, 1937-57; Westinghouse Electric  
Corp., 1958-61; Monroe County Public Library, 1964-66;  
Indiana University, 1966-68; Vigo County Public Library,  
director, 1968-82.

Special interests, activities, etc. see attached

Major subject(s) of interview: Vigo County Public Library,  
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Interviewing sessions:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Interviewer</u>
06/29/81		Vigo County Public Library Conference Room	Wm. B. Pickett

8202675

## BIO DATA ON EDWARD N. HOWARD

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A native of Sullivan County (IN), Edward N. Howard came to the Vigo County Public Library system in January, 1968, from the Division of Continuing Education at Indiana University.

Following a twenty-year tour with the U.S. Navy, Howard returned to Indiana in 1957, and began his studies in preparation for library administration at Indiana University, where he graduated with highest distinction and nomination to Phi Beta Kappa honorary society. He holds BA and MA degrees. He was head of extension services and assistant director of the Monroe County Public Library before joining the Indiana University faculty.

Howard brings to the library field a broad background of engineering administrative experience. Collateral duties on Navy ships and stations have included information and education officer assignments, instructor in Japanese language and culture, and acting chaplain. A prisoner of war during World War II after being captured when the USS Penguin was sunk by enemy planes on December 8, 1941, he was held in a number of Japanese POW camps until September, 1945.

In July, 1968, Howard adapted participative management practices to the Vigo County Library by establishing an Executive Committee for "administration by consensus", and in December, 1969, extended participation in problem solving and decision making to all full-time staff through the creation of a new organizational structure called the "Orbital Organization." This first-of-its-kind organization of staff members into orbital groupings combines the essentials of institutional life--command, coordination, co-existence, and communication--into a single structure, an innovation that received national attention. Then in 1969 the Vigo County Public Library received the national John Cotton Dana Public Relations Award for "its well-devised approach to broadening the base of library users through many avenues while revitalizing the public's appreciation of existing library services."

Howard served as editor of FOCUS ON INDIANA LIBRARIES, quarterly journal of the Indiana Library Association, from 1966 to 1970, and in October, 1969, was named Librarian of the Year by the Indiana Library Trustees Association. He was a visiting lecturer at the University of Kentucky for the 1971 intersession, and served as emcee at the 1971 ALA "Dollar Decisions" preconference on the planning-programing-budgeting system and at the 1979 ALA preconference Workshop for Editors of Library Newsletters. He also is an adjunct Associate Professor of Library Science at Indiana State University.

In 1971 he was named one of five persons from Indiana by the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop a public program relating the humanities to public policy issues in the state, and served as a member of the NEH-sponsored Indiana Committee for the Humanities until 1975.

Howard serves on the board of trustees of Terre Haute Regional Hospital, one of the 150 medical facilities operated by the Hospital Corporation of America. He also serves on the following boards of directors: Terre Haute Rotary Club, general secretary; Wabash Valley United Way, vice president for communications; and Wabash Valley Press Club, chairman of Membership Committee and fiscal agent for the Vigo County Oral History Project.

He is past chairman of the board, Wabash Valley United Way, and served as general campaign chairman in 1974 and two terms as president, 1975 and 1976. He also is past chairman of the Central Business District Committee, Terre Haute Area Chamber of Commerce; the Mayor's Citizen Advisory Committee, City of Terre Haute; and the Task Force on Transportation for the Elderly in Region Seven, a six-county area in the Wabash Valley.

In 1974 he received the Award of Merit from the Wabash Valley Central Labor Council, in 1975 the Distinguished Service Award from the Terre Haute Jaycees, and in 1976 the Labor Day Award from the Wabash Valley Central Labor Council. In 1980 he was named to the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels by John Y. Brown, Sr., governor of the state of Kentucky, and was presented the Communication and Leadership Award by District II of Toastmasters International.

He served on the Council of the American Library Association as the elected representative of the Indiana Chapter, the Continuing Education Advisory Committee of the Indiana State Library, and is past member of the Council Committee on Publishing. He is currently serving on the Joint Legislative Committee of the Indiana Library and Trustee Associations.

Author of more than forty published articles and reports, he is now best known for his monograph Local Power and the Community Library (ALA, 1978, 56 p.). He has conducted workshops on community power in Fairfax City VA, Tulsa OK, Madison WI, Dallas TX, and Wilkes-Barre and King of Prussia PA. He has spoken at universities, libraries and conferences throughout the country.

Additional biographic information appears in Who's Who in the Midwest and in a feature in April 1974 American Libraries.

EDWARD N. HOWARD

Tape 1

June 29, 1981

Vigo County Public Library Conference Room, Terre Haute, IN

INTERVIEWER: William B. Pickett

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

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WBP: Today is Monday, June 29, 1981. My name is Bill Pickett and I'm interviewing Ed Howard in the conference room of Vigo County Public Library. With me today is Darlene Norman who may have a question or two that she will be asking. We may have a conversation in fact off and on here.

Ed, you remember Terre Haute as a child. You lived south of town, I believe. Can you tell us about your first memory of Terre Haute -- where you were living at the time and how you happened to come to Terre Haute?

HOWARD: I was born in 1920. I was born on a farm down in Sullivan County. Once or twice a year in the '20s, we would come to Terre Haute because we had relatives here. And it was the high point of my life -- those occasional trips that we made to the big city. It was fabulous. It was fantastic. It was my exposure to the outside world, because I guess you had everything here then that you would have in the larger cities. And it was so very exciting to me. We made the trip, of course, in Ford Model-T's. Probably the first one trip to my earliest memory was in a Model-T touring car. That's the one that carried four people, had two seats -- two double-seats. And the route to Terre Haute wound around on the old what they called the Dixie Bee Highway, it became U. S. route 41 in 1926 which about 1924 had been paved. Prior to that time it was gravel. I don't remember it when it was gravel. But I can remember -- it must have been when I was about 5 or 6 years old -- seeing that Dixie Bee Highway paved in the small town of Carlisle, which was a town of about 1200 people then.

WBP: What was your father's occupation?

HOWARD: My dad was a farmer. He had been a coal miner but during my early years he was a farmer. We had 40 acres. I remember we raised two, three, sometimes four acres of tomatoes that we had to haul either to Carlisle for shipment to Terre Haute or on rare occasions brought them to Terre Haute to the Loudon

HOWARD: Packing Company, I believe it was called. Maybe it was the canning company. Anyway that was where they canned our tomatoes.

And, of course, you didn't have the price stabilization and support then as you have now. And one of my early memories . . . even though there was some kind of a contract that my dad had with Louden's, I think it was just an agreement -- "all right, if you plant two acres of tomatoes, we'll take them" -- but I don't think there was any guarantee of price. And I can remember seeing my dad along with other farmers dump tomatoes either in Carlisle or feed them to the hogs because the price was so low it wasn't worth hauling them.

WBP: You're talking about the 1920s then?

HOWARD: Yeah, I'm talking about the 1920s now. And it was also in the '20s, I guess about 1926 or '27 . . . these are my early memories I'm talking about now. I started to school when I was . . . well, 5 or 6, somewhere in there. And so it would have been about 1926-27 when the Paul Cox Field was developed, and I can remember driving by there and how exciting it was to me to see the planes. And I remember the Terre Haute Star at that time. Of course, the Terre Haute Star was the only paper as far as the people in Carlisle and Sullivan County were concerned. Apparently, it was . . . partly I think because it was a morning paper, and so it would come out and it would seem more like fresh news -- come out on the route. But the Terre Haute Star ran a series on the front page, "How to Fly an Airplane." And I read . . . I started reading at a very early age. My mother was a former school-teacher and what spare time we had on the farm, why she taught me to read. And so I can remember and it was probably 1927 -- I must have been 7 years old -- reading a series of articles about how to fly a plane. And that you pushed the stick forward until you got it to a certain speed and the tail lifted off the ground. And then you pulled the stick back to become airborne. It's funny how things like that will stick with you.

WBP: Yes, it is. Did you ever fly later?

HOWARD: Never did.



WBP: How frequently as a child would you come to Terre Haute?

HOWARD: Probably two to four times a year and when we did come -- we didn't have much money -- maybe they would buy . . . and of course, things I remember were the things that affected me directly. Maybe I would get a new pair of overalls or . . . . As I got older, of course, it'd be time to buy me a suit or maybe I'd get a pair of dress pants. And I can remember going with my dad down on Wabash Avenue to a clothing store and going in. And dad wasn't much of a bargainer. In fact, he wasn't much of a talker really. And we got in there and there was a high-pressure salesman [who] was determined that he was going to sell dad something for me that dad didn't think was appropriate. And so dad tried to leave. And the salesman followed dad clear out on the sidewalk there on Wabash Avenue. My dad was getting mad and I was embarrassed. And [the salesman was] determined (laughs) he was going to sell whatever it was -- a pair of pants or overalls or something -- determined (chuckles) he was going to sell dad a piece of clothing.

But I would be given perhaps 25 cents to go to the five-and-dime store. And I'd spend probably a couple of hours looking around there, deciding if I wanted a top or some marbles or a knife. And it was amazing as I look back on it, how much you could buy for 25 cents. And so it doesn't seem like much now, but 25 cents to a boy on a small farm when eggs were selling . . . well, eventually -- at least during the Depression in the early '30s -- selling for 8 cents a dozen, why 25 cents was a lot of money.

WBP: You don't remember the name of that men's store, do you?

HOWARD: No, I don't.

WBP: You're saying that during the '20s and '30s for you, your father, and your family times were difficult economically?

HOWARD: Extremely difficult. I suppose they were at their worst when the banks failed, just after the banks closed. And one humorous aspect of that . . .

HOWARD: now I don't remember when the banks closed. Was it 1931?

WBP: 'Thirty-two, I believe [actually, 1933].

HOWARD: 'Thirty-two?

My mother, especially -- and she was the predominant influence on my life -- she wanted to instill all of the good qualities of character including thrift. But I was never naturally inclined to thrift. But mother made me start a savings account in the bank.

So, one year I bought a calf for a few dollars, raised the calf to a cow, and then that cow had a calf. And so I sold the cow and calf for about \$35 which had to go into the savings account. Well, I discovered that if I took my savings account pass-book to school with me, that during the noon hour I could go over to the bank and I could draw out 25 cents or 50 cents or, if I really felt daring, draw out a dollar. Well, that happened the year prior to the banks' closing. And when the bank closed and all the people lost their money, Edward Howard didn't lose any money because he had (commences to laugh) it all drawn out of the savings account which made it much easier for me to tell my dad and mother, "No. Don't worry about the money I lost in the bank because I didn't really lose any." (laughs)

(WBP and DN join in laughter)

HOWARD: Which also gives you an insight to my character.

WBP: During your childhood then, you did chores around the farm? Is that how you earned your money?

HOWARD: Until . . . I guess I got an allowance of sorts, but by the time I was 11 or 12 I would work for other people. And during the haying season . . .

WBP: As a farmer?

HOWARD: Yes . . . or the threshing season, any kind of work like that. We got 25 cents, sometimes 50 cents a day for farm work. So I could pick up some money when they cut wheat, you know, the shocking wheat, when they cut it with the old horse-drawn binders.



HOWARD: You had to take the bundles and put them into stacks we called shocks. And then whenever they could get the old steam-engine combine to come around -- because it would go from one farm to another -- that was an interesting time to see the threshing machine come to your part of the country. And you'd watch it clang down the road. Well, hardly anything passed, you know -- I mean a car or a truck occasionally but not something as interesting looking as an old threshing machine. I'd stand there when I was younger before I was able to work out and watch it come down the road. I know my heart would beat twice as fast as it normally did. I was fascinated by machinery and motion and the sound, the action, the smell. And as I got older, I was able to work hauling the wheat in. Or I can remember . . . we didn't have a buggy. We had horses, of course. And I remember I think we borrowed a buggy, and I used one of our horses to carry water out into the field because some of the people were working in the field loading the wagons. The wagons would go in and unload at the threshing machine. And then there was a wagon or truck to haul the wheat off. And usually they scooped it into the bin. Sometimes they would haul it in town. And so you had to take the old crock-type water jugs with fresh cool water. And as a stopper they had a corn cob in the top of them. And so you'd run madly all over the field, taking water to the people. And you could just get there before they seemingly died of thirst again, you know. (laughs) It was amazing how much water they would drink.

WBP: Yes.

HOWARD: But it was fun driving out through there, all the action. And there might be . . . oh, always 10 or 15 people. There might be 25 or 30 men working on a particular farm at that time. Then, of course, you had a big dinner that was prepared by the woman of the house with the help of the neighbors, usually set it outside under a tree and so the people ate well. So I got a good free meal along with it.

WBP: And the group of men would go from one farm to another doing the harvesting?

HOWARD: Yeah. Not necessarily the same group of people, but if they were on our farm, for example, it was usually exchange work. People would come over and

HOWARD: help us, and then we had to go over and help them. Either on the same or on a similar job.

WBP: Sure.

HOWARD: A lot of things were different then. For example, the road repair. I can remember . . . I don't think dad got paid for it, but I think he had to do a certain amount of work on the road. And we had a wagon bed that was especially made to haul gravel. The sides would come off and then the bottom was boards, oh, probably 4 inches wide. They'd come off one at a time. And you couldn't haul a heck of a lot of gravel as far as the cubic measurement of it because it was so heavy. But we'd take that old specially-made wagon, and we'd go down to a creek. And we would scoop gravel in it. Then we would take it to put it on the road and take the wagon bed apart bit by bit and scoop it out and spread it. I think that that was the way of fulfilling something that was required by the township or the county.

WBP: This was a local road between one town and another.

HOWARD: Local road, yes. Um hm.

WBP: Did you have brothers and sisters?

HOWARD: No.

WBP: You were an only child?

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: Can you pinpoint the location where your dad's farm was? Where this farm was that you were raised on?

HOWARD: Carlisle is about 35 miles south of Terre Haute on U.S. 41. And our farm was 4-1/2 miles east toward the town -- small mining town -- of Pleasantville. It was near the Indian Prairie Baptist Church.

WBP: How did your father happen to stop mining and start farming, do you know that?

HOWARD: No, I don't know that.

WBP: Did he mine ever during your childhood or had he left mining?

HOWARD: No, it was before my memory started. It was before my memory started. We were talking just recently about -- the one child is still at home, B.J.'s son, my wife's son -- about being born in a hospital. And I spoke up and said, "Well, I certainly wasn't born in a hospital. I was born near that farm at my grandmother's home out near Indian Prairie church." And so those are things that are different 60 years ago than today. You didn't find people born in hospitals. We weren't enmeshed in organizations then like we are now. Our world was much smaller.

WBP: That's right.

Did you . . . you mentioned the automobile that you would come in to town by car. Did you ever come into town by interurban?

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: Where did that run?

HOWARD: I don't remember the family coming to Terre Haute on the interurban. But I had an aunt and uncle that lived near Mooresville up toward Indianapolis. In fact, they lived right across the road from John Dillinger's home place. And I never knew John. I knew his father because I'd go up there and spend summers. But that must have been about the time that . . . or just after John Dillinger was killed because I believe he was killed in the middle '30s. But anyway I can remember when I must have been 12, 13 years old. I was in Mooresville with a bicycle. I had a bicycle. Maybe I bought it while I was up there, and I wanted to go back to Carlisle. So I caught the interurban probably about Plainfield and rode the interurban. And I could take it [the bicycle] . . . or I could put it right on the end of the car. [I] got off at Terre Haute and then caught another interurban south. But for some reason I couldn't go all the way to Carlisle. And so wherever it went to, I got off and rode the rest of the way home.

HOWARD: The interurbans were extremely fast and, again, I keep using the word exciting, but there were things that thrilled me as a boy. The airplanes, the steam engine, the interurban, the trains which I want to mention later. But the interurban was a very thrilling ride for a young boy off the farm. And they were pleasant rides. Today the . . . there's a false politeness on the part particularly of airline stewardesses, airline personnel. Oh, can I help you with this and help you with that? But you get the feeling -- and I suspect it's true in most cases -- that they really don't care whether they help you or not so they smother you with a kind of hypocritical kindness. But then it was different.

Your conductor, your brakeman -- whoever you were involved with on the interurban -- they quite often were gruff, but they were all so considerate and very straightforward. And there was no smothering you with anything. And there was no hypocrisy about them.

WEP: Um hm.

You talked about coming to Terre Haute being the high point of your life. It was fabulous. It was your chance to be exposed to the outside world. You also talked about the Terre Haute Star. Apparently the Star was delivered as far as Carlisle, maybe even further. Did the newspaper have an effect on your family?

HOWARD: Well it came down by train and then it was delivered by the post office.

WEP: I see.

HOWARD: The rural [mail] carriers brought the Star.

WEP: And your father would read ads I suppose? You and your family would read ads in the paper that had something to do with . . .

HOWARD: Yeah, well, we . . . you didn't have the mass of what we call "junk mail" then that you have now. And so you didn't get much mail. We didn't have a telephone. If we wanted to use a telephone, we had to go to a neighbor's to use the old hand crank wall phone on the party line.

HOWARD: So, the newspaper was very, very important to our lives. It kept us up on what was going on in the world, so to speak. And was it read thoroughly? I'm sure that my mother read it from the first word to the last word. Dad had particular interests. He probably read the sports page and, of course, everyone looked at the obituaries then because if relatives or friends died, that was important that we be aware of and that we share -- or if people were married. And so the important things in life were things that you wanted to share in and felt that you had to share in.

We bought the Saturday Evening Post. I remember one time . . . my mother would make a little list of things she was going to buy in town. We would normally go in town on Saturday afternoon or Saturday evening, crank up the car. It was . . .

WBP: You're talking about Carlisle?

HOWARD: Yeah. Yeah. It was the place to be. Sometimes you would go in town on Wednesday evening because they had free movies. There was a vacant lot just off the town square, and the merchants in order to induce people to come in and trade, put on free movies. So you would take a milking stool or, if you wanted more comfort, you'd take a seat cushion out of the car and go over there. They sold popcorn or you'd make popcorn and take it in town. And they'd have a cartoon. Then they'd have a feature film. So we'd maybe go in on Wednesday nights.

But for most people, late Saturday afternoon and if you really wanted to get the most out of the evening, you would go in early enough on Saturday afternoon to be able to park right on the square. And then you could sit in your car and you could watch the people pass. Otherwise, you had to sit on the sidewalk or maybe there were some benches around. And part of the time you'd walk around the square. But it was just like the old Spanish or Mexican plaza where all the people gathered and promenaded. And so they would walk around the town square.

But this one Saturday that I remember mother had a note of the things she wanted, and she had "SEP" written on it. Well, I couldn't figure out what "SEP" was and she wouldn't tell me. And I

HOWARD: became so frustrated. "Mother, what's this 'SEP'?" "Well, I'm not going to tell you. You have to figure it out." And it wasn't until we got in town and she bought a copy of the Saturday Evening Post, I realized what "SEP" was. But she would buy every week a copy of the Saturday Evening Post, and much of my early reading came from that magazine. Obviously, it came from the Terre Haute Star also because I remember so vividly that series on how to fly an airplane. (laughs)

WBP: Ha, ha! Well, that . . . it's interesting how wide a radius the media has out of Terre Haute.

HOWARD: Um hm. Um hm.

WBP: Looking at Saturday night in Carlisle, could you compare . . . you'd go there each week, but you would come to Terre Haute much less . . .

HOWARD: Well, Terre Haute was a daytime trip.

WBP: I see. Now . . .

HOWARD: Terre Haute was a daytime trip.

WBP: How long would it take you to get to Terre Haute?

HOWARD: (deep sigh) I imagine it would take an hour because the road wasn't that good. Occasionally we'd have a flat tire, although generally we ran rather trouble-free. Dad kept his equipment up and kept good tires on the car. But our speed was probably 25, 30, 35 miles an hour at the most. And I imagine from out in the farm it would have taken perhaps up to an hour-and-a-half. But it was always a daytime trip. I don't ever remember until I grew up being in Terre Haute at night.

WBP: I see.

Could . . . compare Carlisle in those days with Terre Haute. I mean your feelings about . . . your feeling when you came to Terre Haute versus coming to Carlisle -- a small town versus the larger town.

HOWARD: Well, in Carlisle you felt constricted by the fact that everyone knew you. You were constrained



Tape 1

HOWARD: in your actions. There were certain things, certain rules of behavior. You had to be . . . the social amenities, you know. You carried them out in a certain way. Whereas I think I acted the same in Terre Haute, but the constraining element was not there. You didn't see people that you knew; and so there was a freedom -- [a] kind of an exhilarating freedom -- that went with what to me was a new world, a new way of life.

WBP: When you think back now, what do you remember about Terre Haute? What is it that you saw that seemed different and exciting?

HOWARD: There were some very nice homes here. As we would drive up what is now 7th Street which then was U.S. 41, beginning with down by where the Country Club is and Gibault School, [there were] all kinds of different things, great things, interesting things. The Paul Cox Field. And then as you would come into Terre Haute by where Interstate 70 is now, [there was] the area of nice homes and shade trees. It was luxurious living compared to what we knew on the farm and compared to what the town of Carlisle was in general. And you had streetcars. You had ways of transportation that we neither had nor needed, really.

And then, of course, downtown with its hotels, large railroad station, it was a kind of an entrance to the entire world. If you were going to go to Egypt or to China or to Canada or to New York City, here was the gateway was the way that we saw it.

DN: Did you go to any theater, vaudeville, circuses that were here?

HOWARD: Yes, the one that I remember the most though is the old Fox Theater in Indianapolis -- a burlesque theater. I can remember seeing the movie, "Stage Door," in Terre Haute. But I believe that was after I joined the Navy in 1937 that I saw "Stage Door." But there were things that made an impression on you then. Well, they had to make an impression in order for me to remember it.

WBP: Where did you see "Stage Door"?

HOWARD: I do not know. I was in Terre Haute, but I don't remember.

WBP: You mentioned railroad stations. Which railroad station do you remember most vividly?

HOWARD: Well, it was one on 7th Street up north of what was then the Indiana State Teachers College Normal.

WBP: Big Four Station?

HOWARD: Yes, the Big Four station.

DN: Did WBOW radio come out your way?

HOWARD: I don't remember listening to radio as a child. Now, I can remember the first radio that came into that area. My uncle who lived at Mooresville was an electrical engineer and rather . . . he definitely was successful and rather well off. And so in the middle '20s, I guess it was, he brought an old Atwater Kent radio with the huge speaker like you see the RCA trademark now -- the master's voice, you know, that huge speaker, that funnel-shaped thing. Radio big and bulky hooked up to batteries. And it had three dials on the front of it. He set it up at my grandmother's house. And I remember all the family listening to that radio.

I take it back. I remember listening to radio programs such as "Ma Perkins," I believe it was -- advertised some kind of soap. I guess it was one of the early soap operas. I can remember listening to that. "Amos and Andy," "Fibber McGee and Molly" -- some of the early shows -- "The Shadow," "Lone Ranger," but I don't remember listening to music. I don't remember listening to radio as we listen to it now. It might have been because it took battery and so you didn't operate it much. Maybe you didn't turn it on. I can remember hearing Lowell Thomas.

WBP: During your childhood on that farm there was no electricity, is that . . .

HOWARD: That is correct. No electricity, no telephone.

WBP: Coal oil lamps?

HOWARD: Coal Oil lamps. We had an aladdin lamp which gave very good light. Coal stoves, wood stoves. A smokehouse. If you wanted cool milk, you hung it down in a well.

WBP: What other kinds of things would you remember about Terre Haute?

HOWARD: (pause)

DN: Did anyone come in and work here from that far away?

HOWARD: No. No.

DN: Just came in to trade?

HOWARD: That is correct. You came primarily . . . primarily to shop and to visit relatives. But it also had an entertainment value that I think we all recognized. It was an outing. It was the big event and we planned well ahead for it.

WBP: You're talking about the trip itself?

HOWARD: Yes. Yeah, yeah. Why come to Terre Haute? Well, you would come to Terre Haute . . . not that you couldn't buy overalls in Carlisle, but since it was time to make the trip to Terre Haute, you'd see if you couldn't buy some up here, a little better or a little cheaper or something. Things were undoubtedly cheaper than they were in Carlisle. You had a larger selection.

What do I remember about Terre Haute? I remember a kind of a stability to it. There was a stateliness. There was the courthouse and a solidness. It appeared that it was eternal. It was solid. It was something that would always be here. It had an enduring quality to it.

WBP: Was there also a dynamism or a sense of activity? Do you remember that?

HOWARD: Yes, because of the stores, the shops, the office buildings, the hotel. Yeah, it was a very active place, a bustling place. You know, looking for a place to park, you had the same problem then as you have now. The streetcars going by. The

HOWARD: street vendors. Policemen at the street corners.  
Yeah. Very lively place.

WBP: Did you ever during your childhood feel like  
you'd like to be a farmer, stay on the farm?

HOWARD: No. No.

WBP: Never did?

HOWARD: Never. I didn't care all that much for farming.  
It was hard work.

WBP: Hard work?

HOWARD: To me that wasn't where the action was. (laughs)

WBP: What made you decide to leave the farm? I  
mean you just . . . I mean you were clearly going  
in that direction anyway.

HOWARD: I think reading and the thirst that developed  
to see other places, other life styles, the desire  
to experience firsthand some of the things that I  
read about. I probably read every Western story  
that had been written by the time I was 16 -- all  
of the Zane Greys, the Max Brands, Jack London --  
all of them. And so, as soon as I got old enough,  
I wanted to see the places that I had read about.  
Reading, vicariously wasn't enough.

WBP: How old were you when you left the farm?

HOWARD: Fifteen.

WBP: Fifteen?

HOWARD: Fifteen, I went on the bum. When I was talking  
about the interurban, I said I wanted to mention the  
trains. The trains were a very important means of  
transportation not only for goods, farm produce,  
manufactured items that you'd buy that had been  
shipped in, but also for paying passengers and  
then for people like me at age 15, bums, because  
you could hop a freight car, and you could ride to  
Chicago through part of Illinois free, without  
paying. And I just didn't have the money for a  
ticket. So if I wanted to go, I had to either  
hitchhike or ride the train. Riding the freights  
was the preferred way.

WBP: And that's what you did?

HOWARD: That's what I did.

WBP: Where did you get on the freight?

HOWARD: Ooooh. [I] caught a ride with a produce truck that came through Carlisle out of the south. I caught a ride to Terre Haute and I don't remember where I caught the freight, but I know I went through Danville, Illinois, on up to Chicago. And I made that route a couple of times. I can remember . . . in fact just last week I looked at a place down by Paxton, which is the first small town north of Carlisle where there is a small, spring-fed lake. That used to be the watering station for the trains along there when they were running locomotives. And it seems to me that when I made the trip back down toward Carlisle, not being sure that that train was going to stop at Carlisle, I would get off when it would stop to take on water there at Paxton, which was . . . umm . . . four or five miles north of Carlisle. Then hike on down.

WBP: It sounds like you're going on the train several times, going up and then coming back, and staying home for a while and then leaving again a number of different times?

HOWARD: Yes. And I managed to get enough money together -- I think it was \$30 or \$35 -- to buy a one-way bus ticket to San Pedro, California. I had relatives there. So I went out to San Pedro. One of my recollections is a bus in the Midwest that had the . . . instead of having a blunt nose like so many of the buses have, it was this old style you'd see in old movies -- with a long hood and a big radiator out in front of it. Otherwise, the buses were more modern, but that one I remember in particular, what a rough ride it was and what a rough road. But how beautiful the West was then. And the bus driver pointed out to us ruts from the old stage coach road as we were driving out in Kansas and Colorado. And then I went on the bum again, because I couldn't eat free off my relatives too long. So I worked as a ranch hand and worked as a gardener's helper, stayed at skid row mission down in Los Angeles, worked as a dishwasher in a little restaurant next to the main gate of the RKO Radio [motion

HOWARD: picture studios. And that's when I saw the Navy -- the fleet, the Pacific fleet -- come back from maneuvers in Hawaii and saw that these sailors not only got to travel, they had nice-looking uniforms. And they had money and I said that was for me and came back to Indiana so I could join because my parents had to sign and so the only way, really, for me to get in. And it was difficult to get in there. You couldn't just go sign.

WBP: This was 1937?

HOWARD: Well, in 1935-36 I was pretty much on the bum. I came back in December of 1936 to Indiana. I would be 17 in January, 1937. And so I put in my application to join the Navy. I learned later there were 60-some odd who wanted in at that time, were trying to enlist. And they took 6 of us.

WBP: My goodness!

HOWARD: If you didn't have a high school education and good character references, a clear record, you didn't get in. I was held up by the Ohio River flood. They had a big flood that year -- the spring of 1937. They closed all the recruiting stations and sent the recruiters down to help with the flood victims. And so it wasn't 'til April they got back in commission.

WBP: Now, this is Depression time in U.S.A. and so the people are looking for work, and they're looking for . . . the young men are looking for adventure, too, and in this case . . .

HOWARD: And security. We were also looking for security. You were tired of 50-cents a day jobs, not knowing where you would sleep or where you would eat next. You wanted a little better life. Everybody did, I guess.

WBP: Ed, you apparently finished high school.

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: You finished high school very young then.

HOWARD: Fifteen.

WBP: Fifteen.



HOWARD: Fifteen, sixteen, I forget.

WBP: If you . . . in 1935 you . . .

HOWARD: I started early and skipped one grade.

WBP: I see. So, by 1935 -- by the time you were 15 -- you had your degree from what? Carlisle High School? And college was out of the question?

HOWARD: I was offered a scholarship to DePauw University and I turned it down. I didn't want any more education; I wanted to travel.

DN: What was Terre Haute like when you came back from the west coast? Do you remember?

HOWARD: Terre Haute hadn't changed that much. It seemed to me that from my earliest memory up until even after World War II, it hadn't changed all that much. To me Terre Haute didn't change until the urban renewal really changed the physical makeup of the city. But otherwise, I myself didn't observe very much change. It seemed to be . . . in terms of its politics, its business and industry . . . it seemed to me to be the same from my earliest memories until at least the time I joined the Navy.

WBP: When you say "politics," what are you referring to? Were you aware of politics then?

HOWARD: Yes. Politics was talked about quite a bit among us in those years, because the decisions that people made were important to us. And after Franklin Delano Roosevelt started some of his what did you call it? The new era?

WBP: The New Deal.

HOWARD: New Deal . . . started the New Deal, why here was a chance to make some money. People were interested in that, so you followed national politics and you followed local politics. Also, the people that were written about were personalities. These were important people. And the reason I say that politically it didn't seem to change, there wasn't the political controversy that I was aware of as I grew up. Things seemed to be stable during my early years.

WBP: Were you aware of a vice district in the city as a young man?

HOWARD: Oh, yes. My dad drove a school bus. Well, he started driving a school wagon and our team of horses were under contract. And my dad drove a wagon probably about a distance from home 7 miles perhaps. So, he'd start early in the morning, drove around picking up the kids, taking them into school. For some reason, I wasn't assigned . . . I wasn't on his route even though I was there where he hooked up, obviously, at home. But his route was different, and so I could go up the road a little piece and catch a school bus rather than ride the wagon. Sometimes I would ride it, because dad always in the wintertime had a little coal-burning . . . not coal-burning, little kerosene stove and carried popcorn and the kids would pop popcorn.

Let's see. What were we talking about?

WBP: Vice.

HOWARD: Huh?

WBP & DN: (simultaneously) Vice district.

HOWARD: Oh.

(all three laugh)

HOWARD: (continuing to laugh) How did we get from there to there?

O.K. The contract with the school then . . . he continued that a number of years. And in 1933 he bought a Dodge . . . a new Dodge truck, just the chassis. He had a cab. He had a bed. But these were removable so that he could put a school bus body right down on the chassis over the driver's compartment and use that in the winter. But in the summer as soon as school was out, off came the school bus chassis and here was that nice, little old red 1933 Dodge truck begging to be used.

Well, I forged documents and got my chauffeur's license, 'cause you had to have a chauffeur's license to haul for hire. And dad let me use that truck. I don't know why he did, but he let me use that truck and I hauled everything. I hauled gravel for the

HOWARD: highways; I hauled coal for people; I hauled wheat during the threshing season; I hauled cantaloupes and watermelons from just southwest of Carlisle down in the sandy area -- down around Shaker Prairie -- to Terre Haute. And . . .

WBP: I forget. What ages would you . . . what . . .

HOWARD: I was 13, 14 . . . we're talking about 1933, '34 up to perhaps 1935. And the farmers' market was adjacent to what was called the red light district. I don't know if we called it that then or not. We probably did. But, honestly, I didn't understand it. Again, it was just part of the glamour and the excitement of Terre Haute. And while a truck was waiting to be . . .

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 1-SIDE 2

WBP: All right. Then you actually went into one of the houses of ill repute at one point?

HOWARD and DN: (laugh)

HOWARD: What a way to put it!

I didn't see those and I don't think anyone else did at that time as seeing them as houses of "ill repute." At least none of us young men did nor the older men. I don't know how my mother looked at them. I'm sure I never talked about them with her.

But when I would come here with the truck -- and this was only in the summertime while school was out -- there would be free time while we were waiting for the . . . usually melons to be sold and so I had a chance to wander around, go down and buy a hot tamale from the tamale man or buy hamburgers. You couldn't . . . you could get hamburgers in Carlisle but not like you got in Terre Haute.

WBP: Where would you go?

HOWARD: Down on Wabash, a little place on the corner. I remember a white ceramic front and I don't know the name . . .

DN: Is that Hill's?

WBP: Hill's Snappy Service, was it called Hill's?

HOWARD: I don't know. It was on the south side of the street. It must have been around 5th or 6th on Wabash Avenue and the hamburgers there were unlike the kind you would get anywhere else.

But back to the so-called red light district, the houses looked just like homes. There was no difference in them. There may have been red lights in their windows. I suspect there were. I don't recall. The drapes were usually open and you could see the women in there. They were always so well dressed and looked quite lovely. In fact, to me they were beautiful.

I recall one time for a reason that I don't remember -- because I was shy and wasn't really old enough to be drawn to the places -- but out of curiosity I guess or maybe on a dare, I walked into the front room. There was no one in there. And so I walked into the front room; and as I did, a woman came down from the second floor, came down the staircase. She was dressed in a . . . she was tall, slim, also very pretty. She had on a black dress, floor length. That much I remember. And looked at me and said in effect, "Kid, beat it, you got no business here." She wasn't rude. She was very forthright, probably said, "All right, boy, what do you want?" or something like that. But anyway, I turned around and beat it out of there.

WBP: The red light district is noted for being rather extensive. There were many, many houses apparently. Do you have any sense of that?

HOWARD: I remember that it covered at least one full block. It might have been two or three blocks. I have just a vague memory of an area. I think the farmers' market was on 1st Street up toward . . . up toward Chestnut, up in there. And so the red light district must have been on 2nd Street, perhaps. It could have been . . . it was at least a block. It

HOWARD: could have been several blocks long. I don't know. I remember . . . in my mind I remember one block of houses on the west side . . . on the east, excuse me, on the east side of the street.

WBP: Of 2nd Street?

HOWARD: Probably 2nd Street. I don't know.

The produce that you would bring wouldn't always sell. What you would have would be retailers from Terre Haute, surrounding towns, larger retailers or wholesalers from Chicago. And if things worked out right, you came in and the owner found a willing buyer and they got off-loaded immediately. Sometimes you didn't.

I remember bringing a load of cantaloupe up one afternoon, and we stayed here all night.

DN: Where did you stay?

HOWARD: Stayed right in the truck. You had no money to go to a hotel. I never stayed in a hotel until I was . . . well, on my own and had an income. You'd sleep in the cab or on the ground or back with the cantaloupe or lay on a table. They had a bunch of tables around there . . . lay on the table. So, we peddled those melons the next day. We went to towns like Linton and Brazil. And the two of us -- the guy who owned the melons and I -- we went door to door peddling melons.

WBP: Did you enjoy that?

HOWARD: No. No, I didn't enjoy that part. What I enjoyed was driving the truck. I didn't enjoy the hard work that went with it.

WBP: You didn't enjoy knocking on doors and . . .

HOWARD: No. No, no. I didn't care for that.

DN: How did you get paid? Did they have to sell everything on the truck to be paid? If it wasn't sold, you didn't get paid?

HOWARD: You would get paid for making the trip regardless, but there was kind of a -- as I recall -- a joint responsibility. Maybe a hard-nosed hauler

HOWARD: wouldn't have felt that way, but I did. If I took a load of something, I felt I had a responsibility with the guy who owned it to help him get rid of it. What was bad this particular time was that I was due to haul wheat the next morning and being young, I didn't realize the importance of being there when the threshers started. And so when I did finally get back to where they were threshing wheat that evening, why there were some people kind of sore at me because I hadn't showed up that morning.

WBP: Um hm. Do you remember . . . you mentioned politics. Do you remember New Deal works projects to combat the Depression in Terre Haute?

HOWARD: Yes. They were felt in a variety of ways. There was a camp over by Jasonville that I worked at for a while along with a young man by the name of Keith Shake, who's here in Terre Haute. I went to school with him. And Keith has done some research on that camp. But you were cleaning an area for a park or enlarging a park. It was probably Shakamak State Park where it was. But, gee, you had a place to sleep, you had food, and you got paid for it.

WBP: Civilian Conservation Corps.

HOWARD: That's it. The three C.

Then the schools -- there was some kind of program in the schools that had the word "Y" in it.

WBP: Youth . . . National Youth Corps, I think.

HOWARD: NYC?

WBP: NYA, National Youth Administration.

HOWARD: Perhaps that, NYA. And you could do a small amount of work, maybe a couple hours' work a week at the school and get, you know, 50 cents an hour or something like that for it which was big money. It was important money. And so what came out of the New Deal just injected new life into communities like Carlisle and the surrounding areas.

My dad worked on the WPA Works Progress Administration on the roads, too.



HOWARD: I remember some families would go to the township trustee; and you could get canned meat and things like that, relief. But my father and mother wouldn't go. And I can remember a neighbor giving us a large can of beef that they got from the township trustee. And how good that meat was! And I couldn't understand why my parents wouldn't go to the township trustee where we could get free meat. Proud.

WBP: Too proud.

HOWARD: Yeah. Yeah, relief was a dirty word.

WBP: What about Terre Haute? Was Terre Haute's attitude toward the New Deal favorable?

HOWARD: I can't say about Terre Haute, but I would assume that the same kind of attitude toward public works projects existed here in the Terre Haute area as it did in the Carlisle area. Because people saw that they were giving a fair day's work for a certain amount of pay. And it was an opportunity because you needed that money. The one thing we didn't have on the farm was money. You could raise two acres of tomatoes and maybe you couldn't sell them. And you had to dump them. Or you could raise corn, and I can remember a bug called the chinch bug -- little red bugs. And they would come in and just move right on through a cornfield. And just wipe out a corn crop. Or bad weather, too much rain, not enough rain, and it could ruin our pasture. And you could have a year where you didn't know if you were going to survive or not. And it was a matter of getting a little cash income.

Of course, there were a lot of jokes about the WPA. I remember what we called it -- "We piddle around."

WBP: Yes.

HOWARD: About the people leanin' on their shovels . . .

WBP: Well, so Terre Haute did benefit. A lot of sidewalks, even around my house, were built by WPA and some school buildings, I believe, were built. And ISU [Indiana State University], some of the ISU buildings were constructed during that time.

HOWARD: To me, it was one of the greatest programs this country has ever had.

WBP: Were your parents Democratic in their politics?

HOWARD: My mother was . . . she thought there was only one party and that was the Democrat party. My father, I'm not sure about.

WBP: He was not so political. He didn't . . .

HOWARD: No.

WBP: Would you . . . did you become involved in politics during the Depression period?

HOWARD: I did not.

WBP: You were more of an observer then?

HOWARD: Yes. Very casual observer.

WBP: Did you have a sense of Terre Haute being a labor city at this time?

HOWARD: Yes, because we were aware of the strike here. That came I think also in the middle '30s. And much aware . . . of course, I didn't understand the forces behind it. But, yes, I had a sense of awareness of it, understanding of it, no. (pause)

We didn't have unions in Carlisle, in Sullivan County. I don't think we fully understood them. There were movies /newsreels/. We knew it was a kind of a battleground. I think we were favorably inclined toward the unions because we ourselves had been gouged by, or felt we were treated unfairly by Loudon Packing Company, for example. When they won't take the tomatoes that you had slaved over, something was wrong.

WBP: Yes.

HOWARD: And so we probably blamed the owner or owners of the packing company. And so it would be for that reason very much pro union, any kind of organizing.

Well, they had the Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau was a very important influence, an educational

HOWARD: organization in our lives. And I can remember attending probably monthly meetings and programs of the Farm Bureau. They'd hold them at the school auditorium. I recall my mother being in a debate with someone. I want to say it was George Gettinger, but I'm not sure. But anyway, he was a friend of the family. And the debate was oleo vs. . . . what'd we call it, oleomargarine? I think we just called it oleo. Oleo versus Butter. And mother took the side of butter. And, oh, she was very pro butter. In fact I still eat only butter to this day. I won't eat oleo.

But whoever was on the other side, pro oleo, kind of made fun of it, you know, made it into a humorous thing. My mother was furious because here was a big public debate. She saw it as a serious issue. And if you bought oleo at that time, you got some white . . . you got a white cake. Then you got a little packet of coloring that if you wanted to make it look like butter, you mixed it in with the oleo. (chuckles) So the Farm Bureau, although it was nothing like the Farmers Union that they have today . . . but the Farm Bureau as a cooperative, as a means of disseminating information, as a means of bringing people together, was important. We had the church. We had the Farm Bureau. We had the school. There was the Royal Neighbors. There were the Home Ec clubs.

DN: What was the Royal Neighbors?

HOWARD: Royal Neighbors was a women's lodge. My mother would go to a meeting every month. Beyond that, I don't know anything about it.

WBP: All right.

These were all ways in which the farmers and their families could cooperate with each other for their own self-help during a time of depression?

HOWARD: The Home Ec clubs would exchange recipes and ways of doing things, ways of preserving, salvaging, re-using . . .

WBP: Combination economic and social health.

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: Were you active in extra-curricular activities in high school?

HOWARD: No, I wasn't. I never was athletically inclined. Also, if you say we're on the basketball team or tried out for basketball and went out for practice, that meant you missed the school bus because it was after their school. And that 4-1/2 miles was a long walk to get home in the evening. And so when the school bus went, I went. But I would rather read. I would rather do things on my own than I would the group type of activity.

WBP: Did you think back, were you something of a loner?

HOWARD: Very definitely.

WBP: Before we go any further, let's go back (laughs) to the red light district for just a minute.

Were there bars in with the houses?

HOWARD: I don't recall any drinking.

WBP: All right.

HOWARD: In other words, not like a roadhouse.

WBP: So these were houses just side by side . . .

HOWARD: Regular homes.

WBP: . . . like a residential area?

HOWARD: Yeah. Yes. Yes. Yes. Uh-huh. It was a residential area except we knew that they were used for a different purpose.

WBP: It wasn't an area like we might see today with porno movies and porno shop?

HOWARD: They had no signs. They had no signs.

WBP: I see. So, it looked respectable for all purposes?

HOWARD: Very.

DN:                You learned about it by word of mouth then?

HOWARD:           Yes. Yes. Yes. And, of course, any transient -- what they used to call the drummers, the traveling salesmen, the boomers, the telegraph operators, and others who . . . roustabouts who worked drilling rigs and the like -- by word of mouth they would know. Or you could ask anyone, "Where's the red light district?" "Where's the action?" "Where's the dance halls?" "Where's the speakeasies?"

WBP:              Dance halls and speakeasies, they would tell you where they were. But they would not be in the red light district?

HOWARD:           They would not be . . . they weren't here, anyway. No. No. I don't remember a bar in that area.

WBP:              You don't remember gambling going on?

HOWARD:           No. No.

WBP:              But there were bars and gambling and speakeasies somewhere in the city?

HOWARD:           Oh, yes.

WBP:              They just weren't in that . . . it wasn't a so-called vice district.

HOWARD:           No.

WBP:              That was just . . . those were where the houses were.

HOWARD:           Yeah, it was a more subdued part of town than the regular residential area was. It was quieter.

WBP:              Let's go on then.

                    When you went into the Navy, what would you say were your most important skills that you took with you?

HOWARD:           I think a . . .

WBP:              Or aptitudes?

HOWARD: Um hm.

WBP: Interests?

HOWARD: A good education, a little bit of musical training, a thirst for knowledge, pretty good communicative skills. I actually went in as a musician, but I found out that that was slow promotion, no travel outfit, and so I changed to engineering.

WBP: Um hm. So you changed to engineering?

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: Had you done mechanical work on the farm?

HOWARD: Yes, mainly in connection with the truck and with the cars. I talked to a fellow down at Carlisle just recently who reminded me of the time, I suppose about 1934, that he and I bought a Model-T Ford. It had a coupe body on it. We took that body off, worked the old Ford over, put on a roadster body without a top, and made a little hotrod out of it.

WBP: Hm.

HOWARD: I also remember selling that in 1936 for \$15.  
(both laugh)

WBP: So, you liked to tinker then, and work with tools, and . . .

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: . . . enjoyed making things run?

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: You mentioned musician. What instrument did you play?

HOWARD: Trumpet.

WBP: And where did you learn to play that?

HOWARD: My mother thought that you not only should be able to read and write, make public speeches, act in school plays -- and I think I always had the lead in the school play -- she kept pushing, prodding, leading, encouraging. And she also thought that



HOWARD: everyone should play some kind of instrument. You know, you weren't well-rounded unless you did.

So some way or other I chose the trumpet. She would make me practice, and I was in the school orchestra and just barely good enough to get in entrance to the Navy band at Great Lakes Naval Training Station.

WBP: So you played in the Navy band at Great Lakes? Or you tried out for it?

HOWARD: No. I was the bugler for the company. You had a long training period then. I think the training period was 12 weeks of boot camp. And by the time you came out, you were pretty well shaped up as far as the Navy was concerned. You were well trained. And instead of carrying a gun, I carried the bugle. And I remember marching in parades in the drum and bugle corps in downtown Chicago while I was in boot camp. But by the time that was finished I had passed the entrance exam to a machinist mates' school on the east coast so I went to 6 months of machinist mates' school. Learned how to operate a lathe, milling machine, shaper -- things like that.

WBP: Before we get . . . extracurricular activities. You mentioned speech and the school plays.

HOWARD: That was about it.

WBP: You did do those things?

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: Was that debate, too? Were you involved in debate tournaments?

HOWARD: And debates.

WBP: Your mother seems to be . . . to have been an important influence on your life.

HOWARD: Primary influence, yeah.

WBP: More influential than your father?

HOWARD: Very much so, yeah. Very much so.

WBP: Was she basically a farm wife and . . .

HOWARD: No. No. I don't know how she ever endured the farm. She was a . . . she was a schoolteacher and was at the time she married my dad during World War I.

WBP: She then left schoolteaching?

HOWARD: Yeah. I think married women could not teach. As I recall you had to be single to teach. She was permitted to substitute teach. She did that.

DN: Did she come to the Normal School for her education?

HOWARD: She did. And you didn't have to have too much education in order to be certified as a teacher. She attended the Indiana State Normal 1913-14 here.

WBP: Is there anything more that you would like . . . that you have in your memory about Terre Haute before you went into the Navy that you'd like to insert in the record at this point? I thought we might move on.

HOWARD: Just a memory . . . since I was fascinated by cars, a memory of the Ford dealer at Carlisle. Every town had its Ford dealer, Chevrolet dealer. There was a fellow by the name of "Red" Skaggs. I usually don't remember names. Staggs or Skaggs, I think it was Skaggs. And he was the Ford dealer in Carlisle. He also was the kind of a Barney Oldfield of the area and was noted for his fast cars and hard driving, so a person that I admired.

Well, Red Skaggs on a trip to Terre Haute down by the Gibault School failed to negotiate a curve around the woods in the lowland just before you go up on the hill in a Model-A Ford, I think, convertible, and was killed down here. These are the kind of things that stick in my mind.

WBP: Um hm. Um hm. Interesting.

HOWARD: So, my world was bounded on the north by Terre Haute; by Carlisle and perhaps Oaktown -- the next town on the south -- on the south; and by the farm and Indian Prairie church and Pleasantville

HOWARD: on the east; and by the Wabash River, Merom, on the west. That was my universe as I was growing up.

WBP: As you went into the . . .

HOWARD: It was a good place to grow up, too.

WBP: . . . Yeah. As you went into the Navy, did you have any sense of what you might do in life? Did you have any sense of what might turn out to be?

HOWARD: None whatsoever. None whatsoever. And I didn't care. I didn't really have a direction. I just wanted to . . . oh, I enjoyed the life of a bum up to a point. I enjoyed . . . well, the loner bit. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed the travel. I enjoyed the new sights, occasionally meeting people, hearing them tell of their experiences. I ran around with a boxer in Los Angeles. He was kind of a stumblebum I guess, but I enjoyed going to the gym with him and working out. I wanted to be a boxer, but for some reason I never did anything other than spar.

I wanted to be a race driver, but for some reason I never got any farther than watching races.

WBP: Anything else you wanted to be?

HOWARD: I wanted to be a long-distance truck driver. Outside of what trucking I did, that's an unfulfilled ambition. I'm too old now at age 61 for the racing, for the boxing, but I'm still not too old to make a cross-country trip in an 18-wheeler. And that's something I may yet do.

WBP: All right (laughs) That's interesting.

HOWARD: There is no . . . there is nothing any more beautiful than a big truck . . . than a big truck. It is one of our most beautiful creations.

WBP: (laughs)

You went into the Navy then, and we have a record on oral history tape of your prisoner-of-war experience.

HOWARD: Um hm.

WBP: And it's a fascinating experience. We don't have a record of the rest of your Navy career and I'm not sure that this is necessarily the appropriate place. But on the other hand, that had to have a marked influence on your life and in the accomplishments that you would later have. Perhaps you could reflect on your Navy career and maybe tell about the things that you think were particularly important to your later life when you come back to Terre Haute in 1968.

HOWARD: I think the experience of traveling and at least being superficially exposed to different cultures, to different attitudes, to different moral standards, to different codes of justice, to a whole array of human behaviors and cultures . . . I think that that prepared me more to accomplish whatever it is I've accomplished than anything else.

I won't go into where I was assigned and all that, but some of the places that I was able to travel to and to at least go ashore and sometimes for repeated visits or long enough to get to know people there included most of the countries in the Mediterranean North Africa, Malta, Gibraltar, France, Rome. One of the high points was a visit to the Vatican City in Rome and an audience with the Pope in 1947, receiving a small medal that he blessed and giving it to some Catholic friends on Guam when I went back to Guam. The Philippines, Okinawa, Japan, Hong Kong, and, of course, having visited most of the states in the United States. [I had the experience of] going as far north as Alaska not getting to go ashore there. [I] suffered by not crossing the equator. All of my travels have been north of the equator unfortunately. But I think that's what prepared me.

WBP: You talk about whole array of different cultures and value systems, codes of justice. Of course, that was most striking in your prisoner-of-war experience. You were submerged in it there. Are there other . . . perhaps you would like to elaborate a little bit on that. Or other countries . . . experiences that you had that were also important in your memory.

HOWARD: I don't think so. I think just the sum total of them made it easier for me to relate to, to communicate with people from different walks of life. And so, maybe I could come closer to walking in someone else's shoes than I could have otherwise. That I believe.

WBP: O.K. Let's talk about the Navy experience itself, working in the Navy hierarchy and working with all the different people that you've worked with there.

HOWARD: I came, in the latter part of my 20-year career, to detest it because it was autocratic, high-handed, and my last couple of ships were not all that enjoyable. Of course, I had become a warrant officer by that time. And I didn't particularly enjoy that low officer rank with tremendous responsibility, and the Navy to me had changed. You didn't have the financial wherewithal to properly equip the ships; you didn't have people aboard who were career people, well-qualified. You sometimes sailed with green crews and so it wasn't as enjoyable. I didn't care as much for the Navy in the latter years. And I think that by the time I got out I had sworn to myself never to tolerate the kind of autocratic government that the Navy had.

WBP: Do you remember an experience . . . you probably have a general feeling for the whole thing, but could you give us examples of decisions going awry. I mean, orders not being carried out or the commanding officer not knowing the circumstances that he had on his own ship?

HOWARD: My last duty station was a Navy tanker, the USS Guadalupe, a fleet oil tanker. I was the assistant engineer officer in charge of three of the five engineering divisions. And the captain put great store in inspections in white uniforms. Well, anytime you get a black gang [engineering] crew topside in white uniforms they don't look as sharp as the deck boys. And the skipper was always on me for the way that my men looked. And so I -- publicly in front of the men -- stood up for them and blasted him for his . . . for being partial and lack of understanding and unnecessary inspections, which endeared me to the men but made an enemy of the commanding officer. And so when I retired, he

HOWARD: didn't give me the usual retirement ceremony of piping over the side and apparently forbid anyone to have anything to do with my going over the side. So, just like anybody else leaving the ship, I just left the ship period.

WBP: I see. That's something one would remember.

HOWARD: Yep.

WBP: There was a certain pettiness about . . .

HOWARD: Oh, yes.

WBP: . . . the Navy.

HOWARD: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes.

All in all, I enjoyed the Navy very much and I support it today. It was good to me. But still I was . . . I had changed myself. The Navy hadn't changed [perhaps], but I myself had changed.

WBP: In what way?

HOWARD: I don't know what brought it about, but in that I was ready for group decision-making as opposed to one-person authority. I don't know.

WBP: You stayed in then. Did you . . . when you got out of World War II, you said . . . had you decided to make the Navy a career then and stay in as long as you could?

HOWARD: Yes. When I went in in 1937, I said, "I'm going to make the Navy a career. It'll give me everything I want in life. And you'll have a small retirement when you get out which will enable you to live, at least. And so I'll be able to enjoy both the Navy career and the afterlife." And I didn't waver in that.

WBP: Um hm. All right. You had changed and, of course, a man does over that period of time. You had positions of enormous responsibility being in charge of the main propulsion system of a fleet tanker, is that right?

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP:           How did you decide what you would do after you left the Navy?

HOWARD:       I didn't. There again, I had no plans. I came to Bloomington, Indiana. We had bought a farm -- the Brown County type farm. And since I still had children at home and had to have some outside income, I became a power plant engineer for Westinghouse Electric Corporation in a new plant they were just opening at Bloomington.

DN:           Why did you choose Bloomington?

HOWARD:       (pause) I had my parents look around for a farm; and I especially wanted to be where it was scenic, where it was pretty. And so I think probably it just was a matter of luck that my parents found a hill farm over east of Bloomington that we wound up there -- somewhere in southwest Indiana. I remember one that they looked at for me -- they were doing the buying on my behalf -- was at English, Indiana, down toward the Ohio River. And so somewhere in there, I think I specified hills and trees as something that I wanted to get back to, having missed that more than anything else.

              There's something I'd like to insert. I mentioned the fact that this part of Indiana was a good place to grow up. And it . . . when you're away from it, you miss the green pastures; you miss the hills; you miss the trees, the streams; and no place else can satisfy that. And of all the places that I had been, to me there is no place quite like southwestern Indiana -- that has the same terrain, has the same type of vegetation, same type of people, and so it's a place that I had to come back to. I lived two years in Hawaii and I didn't enjoy it.

DN:           Change of seasons?

HOWARD:       I missed the change of seasons. And so I liked ice storms because it's different. And you know after the ice storm is going to come, at some time, beautiful weather. And so by accepting the real hot days, the real cold days, the stormy days, then you have these beautiful days in between which makes it all worthwhile.

HOWARD: But I think that's the reason we wound up at Bloomington. My mother also may have thought, "Well, that's near Indiana University," in case some of the kids wanted to go to school. I don't know if I had talked about going on to get an education or not. But after three years, even though it was a good job -- well-paying job -- I just quit. That was it. Me worry? Go on! Quit.

WBP: What age were you now?

HOWARD: Forty-one.

And I thought, "Well, I kinda liked Oregon and there wasn't anything around here. Maybe I'd go to Oregon." For some reason it was in my mind. And I didn't; I started working for an automobile dealer, working in the garage -- service department. And then I happened to think about the GI Bill and the fact that if I went to school, I could get I believe \$140-\$160 a month. Well, that little bit of income . . . and then I could work part-time for the automobile dealer -- the Lincoln-Mercury dealer at Bloomington. He was very good to me there, very kind. I could work odd hours. "Well," /I said,/ "that's what I'll do."

So, at age 41 I started as a freshman at Indiana University. Going to teach school!

WBP: Working as a mechanic part-time?

HOWARD: Well, yeah. It was . . . I worked in the service department. I'd fill in for the service manager, the parts manager . . .

WBP: Sure.

HOWARD: . . . handle warranty claims . . .

WBP: Not a mechanic.

HOWARD: . . . deliver cars. I'd do everything except the front-line mechanical work.

WBP: Administrative?

HOWARD: Yeah, yeah, that sort of thing. Collected past due accounts for them, or tried to. But I



HOWARD: wanted something in the area of communication. I forget what they called the high school teachers in that area. I wanted to teach at the high school level -- communicative arts, I believe. Communication arts or something. Language arts! Language arts! That was it.

WBP: Now, you had in mind to be a teacher, a high school teacher?

HOWARD: Yes. Yes. And so in the school of arts and sciences and in my junior year I became friends with a girl who was working part-time in the . . . what'd they call it then? The library school. The graduate library school. In the graduate library school. She said, say, she'd been reading about some of the opportunities for men in the library profession. So I went over and inquired and sure enough. It was the golden age for people with recent education and particularly for men in public libraries because public libraries had been headed by women. And it was in the . . . let's see. It was in the late '50s, early '60s that many of them were retiring. For example, a very, very fine, capable librarian at Bloomington -- which was a county system, Monroe County library -- by the name of Bertha Ashby. And Bertha had been librarian there for, I don't know, 20, 30, 40, 50 years. And she had retired and a young man, probably 35 years old, had replaced her. So, when I inquired over there, I happened to meet him. And he said, "You can work part-time down at the public library."

So, one thing led to another and by the time I had my bachelor of arts degree, I also had a minor in library science and all of the certification needed for library work in the state of Indiana even though it isn't held to be (you don't have to be certified). But I had to be. For any library that required certification, I had it.

WBP: All right.

So, how did you happen to come to Terre Haute?

HOWARD: I left the . . . I was very fortunate in working at the Bloomington public library because I worked in every area -- circulation, reference, a little bit in the technical services, the cataloging and

HOWARD: the processing. I set up the new county-wide bookmobile system there. I worked in the office. I did their bookkeeping -- just every facet of library operation.

Then, I went with Indiana University on the administrative level in what was called the package library, which was a public affairs reference service -- probably the largest, the finest in the world, which unfortunately was not appreciated by Indiana University nor the state of Indiana as it should have been. But it was a challenge. Here was this collection of millions of clippings, brochures, fliers, reports, articles from newspapers, from magazines, from journals, from all over the world. And it was an opportunity to travel the state of Indiana to see how this information could be utilized in public affairs, both at the local level, state, national, foreign-policy level, whatever. I worked with a very fine professor of government. We put on seminars throughout the state, but mainly I traveled in the public library area.

I also started editing about that time, December, 1966, the quarterly journal for the Indiana Library Association called Focus on Indiana Libraries, which is a very fortunate thing because it gave me the opportunity to not only become acquainted with the leaders in the library field in Indiana but to help shape the direction that Indiana would go through the kind of articles, the kind of news items that were put in the Focus. And during the four years that I served as editor [I] had a great time. And [I] had all kinds of people who were willing to work with me. We published some good stuff, some awful stuff, exciting stuff, new stuff, and became known nationwide as a place where new writers could get off-beat stuff published.

WBP: Ha, ha, ha.

HOWARD: We were runner-up for "Library Journal of the Year" nationally; and it was just a great, marvelous experience.

In 1967 then, just shortly after I became editor of it, became quite active, started doing some writing, I, through a friend of mine who had been at the then Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library, became aware

HOWARD: that this position [in Terre Haute] was open. Well, I wanted that job. I wanted it for several reasons. One, it was home; Terre Haute was home. I'd love to be in Terre Haute, to really get to know it 'cause I never, you know, really knew the town and its people -- although it had been . . . had such an important influence on my life.

Secondly . . .

END OF TAPE 1

TAPE 2

HOWARD: Second, I was in a position to investigate the future of Terre Haute. And it was my conclusion that Terre Haute was on the verge of great expansion, even a boom. It had everything going for it. It had the waterway. It had the second, I believe, second longest airport runway in Indiana. It had a lot of flat land for expansion. It had a good population to draw a work force from. And the one . . . it was the one error that I made, if I made an error, in that Terre Haute didn't develop as much as I thought it would and as quickly as I thought it would.

Third, and probably the most important, the Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library had a wealth of experience in community education, public programming. And it was the kind of base that I myself wanted to try out my own ideas. Back in 1962, I believe, they had worked with the Bureau of Adult Studies . . . Bureau of Studies in Adult Education at IU and had begun some very interesting, worthwhile, and productive experiments in planning public programs and conducting public programs -- community education, adult education type. Terre Haute had an adult educator on its staff, one of the few libraries in the country that had gone so far in the area of adult education to have a specialist on its staff. And so for all of these reasons, I wanted very much to come to Terre Haute.

Again, and I hadn't previously made the connection, I was told that there were 60-some odd applicants for the job -- comparing it to the 60 who wanted to get into the Navy back in 1937. Fortunately, I think perhaps because I had come from this area,

HOWARD: because I had recent education, because I had a considerable background of administrative experience, because I was editor of Focus on Indiana Libraries, I had already done some writing that had been published, I was selected for the job. Also, I recognized as I'm sure those who selected me did, which was the school board then -- the library was under the school board -- that they were taking a chance with me. It was a bit more of a gamble than it would have been with someone who had served as assistant director in a comparable library because I didn't have that much direct public library experience.

WBP: Why would the school board want to take the gamble? Was it a particularly progressive school board?

HOWARD: I think so. Some of the people who were on the board then are still on it; namely, Charlotte Caldwell, Iverson Bell. And they're very capable people, very well educated people, people who take the broad view who would be willing -- and obviously were -- to take whatever risk they saw was involved.

WBP: Had you come back to Terre Haute at any time during your Navy career?

HOWARD: Yes, when I would come back to Indiana on leave, it was natural to come to Terre Haute to visit and for night life, for movies. I don't remember what else I did up here. Undoubtedly some . . . I'd go to some of the dances and things of that nature. Primarily, movies. I was more of a movie buff than anything else.

WBP: Where'd you go to movies?

HOWARD: Couldn't tell you.

WBP: Were there other changes that you noticed in Terre Haute over the years while you were in the Navy? You'd go away and then come back for maybe one night or two nights and then go away for a few more years, I suppose?

HOWARD: All right. But remember it was a long time between visits to Terre Haute. I was here in 1938

HOWARD: and then I did not come back until the end of 1945. The changes that I perceived here were the same ones that I would have seen elsewhere and to me were very natural changes. I can't even recall what they were.

WBP: They weren't changes that were different from other changes that were going on in other American cities at the time?

HOWARD: Right! Right.

WBP: All right.

So, you came to Terre Haute after getting a degree in library science after considerable good, excellent laboratory experience in Monroe County public library.

HOWARD: And the Public Affairs Reference Service. That helped me immensely.

WBP: Public Affairs Reference Service. O.K.

And then the Focus publication.

You say you wanted to try out some ideas that you had. It looked like a particularly fruitful place to try those ideas. What were those ideas?

HOWARD: I had a strong belief in the value of information and in the ability of community citizens to utilize that information in their individual lives and in their public lives. My experience with seminars in foreign policy, with continuous awareness services to selected individuals about the state in their area of interest where we would automatically send to them maybe four or five articles or reports or whatever each month based upon their interest profile. I learned that information was valuable, could be used by almost everyone. I also learned that people didn't want all that much information in what we called our continuous awareness programs. It was easy to saturate the informational thirst of the individual, and so I learned that it didn't require all that much information.

So, it was based also on some courses that I had taken at Indiana University in mass communication, in public opinion, in adult education, and so

HOWARD: all these kind of came together in whatever philosophy I brought with me. And I think it was centered on the fact that a public library should be a community information center, a community information center. And so that was my goal to make this library truly a community information center -- open to and serving the citizens, primarily the adult citizens of the community in a variety of ways.

WBP: How were these ideas different from conventional wisdom in library operation everywhere else in the country or were they different?

HOWARD: They were vastly different. With the adult education activities that the Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library already had, they were working with community groups. Traditionally, a library will put on programs -- film programs, poetry programs, children's programs or whatever. This approach was different. It was radically different in that the library used its expertise to help a community group or groups to develop their own programs regardless if they were held entirely apart from the library, didn't use library materials, maybe even the library didn't get recognition, wasn't a cosponsor. But it was to work with and through community groups to extend the resources of the library. And that was what was radically different.

WBP: All right. So, in other cities, the library is more of a passive institution . . .

HOWARD: Very passive and book oriented.

WBP: . . . uh-huh. And book oriented. So, this was oriented toward . . .

HOWARD: Information . . .

WBP: . . . information.

HOWARD: . . . regardless of its format.

WBP: I see.

HOWARD: Information in all of its forms. And so . . .

WBP: With the understanding that a lot of people don't read books?

HOWARD: Yes. But you would treat equally information that was on audiotape or film or in a photograph or a painting, in a research report, a journal article, a flier -- any of the numerous formats that information might be contained in.

WBP: All right.

And then what, in your view, would be the ultimate goal? What would be the end result of being this kind of a service institution?

HOWARD: That the community would be much more active -- its citizens much more involved in community decision-making; that it would be a progressive community, one open and receptive to new ideas; one that would be innovative, a healthy community, a happier community -- or as we have built into our objective statement here -- our goal statement: "To make the community a better place in which to live."

WBP: All right.

Now, you mentioned that already there were certain community outreach activities going on in the public library. That's what was attractive to you. But your feeling was that they were not information-oriented in the full sense?

HOWARD: The base was here, but the potential had yet to be realized.

WBP: All right.

Did you have a feeling that Terre Haute as a community was a good place to try out these ideas because it needed the stimulus of this community resource?

HOWARD: No, I didn't feel that Terre Haute differed from any other community in "needing it." But it was a community that I knew somewhat, one that I felt comfortable in. It would be like coming back home, and so [I felt] it should be easy for me to work in.

WBP: Sure. You mentioned . . .

HOWARD: To accomplish my own objectives.

WBP: You said you had the feeling that Terre Haute was on the verge of a boom which would indicate that you thought that there would be some visible or tangible result of these actions that you would undertake, if the actions were successful.

HOWARD: Or that they might go on simultaneously with other forms of progress. Not that we would be solely responsible for growth or even partially responsible, but that it was timely and could be accomplished simultaneously.

WBP: All right.

Now, you said you were somewhat disappointed because ultimately the boom that you thought you saw really didn't turn out to be a boom?

HOWARD: Yeah. I don't know that it was [so much] disappointment as it was that that prediction, which I made publicly, proved to be in error. However, as you look at communities which have had the so-called boom, their growth has not necessarily been orderly. And so they are not as desirable places to me to live today as a community like Terre Haute is.

WBP: How did the community differ? After you got here and moved in, undertook your responsibilities and got to know the community firsthand by living here, how did it differ from what you thought it was before you came?

HOWARD: It didn't differ at all. It seemed to me that it was just a matter of getting to know people and knowing more about what was going on, how things got done, who was who, what was where. But I never felt a stranger. I never felt it was any different than I understood it to be or thought it would be.

WBP: All right. Describe the city then. How did things get done? Who was who and what was the mechanics of getting things accomplished in Terre Haute in 1968, 1969, '70?

HOWARD: The day that I was driving to Terre Haute to take over in my job would have been New Year's Day of 1968. And I was to be on the job the morning of the 2nd. I'd already been introduced to the



HOWARD: community. That afternoon I was listening to the radio, and Mayor Leland Larrison was sworn in, which to me was good because that . . . a change in city administration meant that I could also make changes along with it. Since a major change was being made in the city administration, changes would be easier to make in the library system. And so I was pleased for that reason, although one of my contacts here had been Mayor Ralph Tucker.

WBP: O.K. Could you . . . who would be . . . as you moved in and saw the city operate, was it the mayor who made most of the decisions about what would happen in the city? Or were there other leaders, other organizations, other groups? What were the groups and the individuals who made things happen?

HOWARD: Labor was one of them. You had probably half a dozen labor leaders. Ralph . . . who was it? The name is going to escape me now. I wanted to say Ralph Wilhelm. That is not correct. The labor leader who was honored by the Debs Foundation in the late '70s. He died during the '70s, and his name escapes me at this moment. /It was Virgil Morris, and he was honored posthumously./

But he was one of those who symbolized the power of labor. And there were several people involved at the policy decision-making level in labor organizations. One of them was Pete Culver. One of them was John Etling. And these were people who were very helpful to me.

I can't account for it, but so very many people in Terre Haute have helped me in so very many ways. I do not know why. I kind of tongue-in-cheek say that they recognize that here was a person who needed help.

WBP: (laughs heartily)

HOWARD: And that may be true. I don't know. I asked for help. I looked for help. But anyway, the people here responded. Certainly the office of mayor in the city of Terre Haute is an important one. And so after 20 years, it /a change of administration/ meant a great change, almost upheaval. And without consciously trying to because Lee Larrison was the mayor, I came in contact with him through organizations

HOWARD: that I worked with. And I became chairman of what was called first, the Terre Haute Civic Improvement Committee. And as chairman, we renamed it the Mayor's Citizens' Advisory Committee, recognizing that we were only advisory. And so in that way, I came to work closely with the mayor.

The library though is an independent organization. It is a taxing entity, and so for that reason the library cannot ally itself or be solely dependent upon any one center of power in the community. And if it is to serve all segments of the community, then the library head has to know the people who are the leaders in those segments -- such as the mayor, such as the labor leaders, such as those in community organizations. I hadn't been here very long when we invited the heads of several community organizations to take part in a two-day staff institute that the library held to tell us how the community works, how community decisions were made. This included the Vigo County Taxpayers' Association. It included the Housewives' Effort for Local Progress [H.E.L.P.]. It included the Jaycees. It included the Senior Citizens, and I think there was one more. Yes, the League of Women Voters.

These were typical organizations. You had the women's organizations; you had the young men's organizations, the taxpayers' association; and the only thing we didn't have that we should have had at that two-day staff institute were the labor organizations. But this was kind of our introduction to the staff and to the community of drawing people together to discuss how the library's resources can be utilized to fulfill their own goals, their own objectives because the library serves best when it helps individuals, groups, organizations, institutions in the community fulfill their goals. Ours are irrelevant. We should not have independent goals. We should not be in competition with. We should support, help people initiate.

I was fortunate to be invited to join the Terre Haute Rotary Club which had a broad cross-section of community leaders in it, such as Ben Blumberg. A delightful individual. And so I came to know him on a very personal basis and had dinner in Ben's home and he had dinner in mine.

HOWARD: People like Ben Blumberg who knew the community, who were the community. I came to know Forrest Sherer, Tony Hulman. One time I needed to borrow an airplane to get some people to the state of Illinois. I went to see Tony Hulman; Tony Hulman loaned me an airplane. (laughs) It's that kind of thing -- just going out and asking. Asking for help; asking for advice; asking for assistance. At the same time, you say, "How can I serve you, how can I help you?"

DN: Did you not encourage your staff at this time to be more service-oriented?

HOWARD: Yes, and to get out more. One thing I was not able to accomplish was to get every member of the library staff active in community organizations.

DN: This is not [a] typical library.

HOWARD: Even now it is not a typical library with as much activity as we have. Librarians generally are not members -- active members -- of community organizations. They are shy. They are reclusive and just don't become involved.

DN: When you came to Terre Haute, did you know that they were needing a new library? Did you have any idea that you'd spearhead a movement toward a new library?

HOWARD: That wasn't an objective. That wasn't a great concern to me. It became one as we rapidly outgrew our facility down there. And the acceptance by the community generally to our new programs, new procedures, was highly favorable. One of the first things we did at the first meeting I held with the school board acting as the library board was to change the name of the library. A lot of things were, as I look back on it, daring because Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library had existed here since . . . well, the library itself dates back to 1882. Next year will be its centennial of continuous operation. And, of course, with the new building down there that opened in 1906 -- that new building -- it became a fixture in the community, something the community was rightly proud of. And for some newcomer to come in and change the name of the library . . . . But it had to be done. Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library did

HOWARD: not say Vigo County Public Library. It said different things and the image was all-important. If it was to serve the citizens of Vigo County, then it had to be the Vigo County Public Library. No name of an individual could be attached to it. It had to belong to the people.

WBP: You had some administrative ideas as to how you would like to administer the library which were different from the average library. Did those ideas evolve after you came here or did you bring them with you?

HOWARD: Many of them came with me, but they were unformed ideas. And the staff has, all the 13-1/2 years now, worked with me beautifully as a stabilizing influence to keep me and the library out of trouble because many of the ideas as presented were unwise, were ill-formed. Some of them were preposterous. But if I am to be a change agent, then I will . . . I must throw out propose ill-advised, preposterous ideas. And so I think that was probably my role was to be a change agent on behalf of the community. And so whatever did come out of it and . . . because of the experience the staff had had in adult education which requires people to meet in groups and to make decisions utilizing group dynamics, group processes, within six months we discovered that we had a strength that nobody, me above all, knew existed. And that was the power of a group and the fact that whatever comes out of a group will be far superior to what could come out of the sum total of its individuals.

WBP: Had you had any experience with the group dynamics before you came here?

HOWARD: A little. I had taken part in a week-long adult education class that met in isolation in an unused lodge in some park over in Brown County. And the experience there was such that when I came out of it at the end of a week, I felt incapable of dealing with the world that was full of hypocrisy, unshared communication where you had no sharing of feelings, but also an awareness, understanding that this was the way to go. So I did come with that. But still what developed within the first six months I think came as a surprise to all of us.

WBP:           How strong the staff really was?

HOWARD:       And how capable a group of staff members could be. And so from that evolved what came to be known as the "orbital organization" and probably more than anything else gave this library the reputation -- internationally even -- of being an innovator, of being very progressive, of being very efficient and productive.

WBP:           All right. The orbital organization -- there's an article about it that you've written and a number of things on it. It seems to me to be a way of making sure that the people who are absolutely going to carry out decisions have a say in what these decisions will be and help to shape those decisions. Is that the most important aspect of it?

HOWARD:       Theoretically, yes, although it's impossible to achieve. The most important benefit of the orbital organization is communication -- face-to-face, two-way communication. And so it's the only successful communication device that you can have in an institutional setting.

I was never able to, and I don't think anyone can, approach the ideal where all of the groups within the orbital organization meet regularly, function well, deal with decision-making. The farther away you get from the central group, the less decision-making there is. And I don't see any way around it.

WBP:           Has it . . . over the . . . when did you implement this system?

HOWARD:       In 1969.

WBP:           Is it still in effect?

HOWARD:       It still is.

WBP:           All right. Do all of the groups still meet? All the orbits still meet?

HOWARD:       More or less. It's provided a good climate. There's more openness here than we would have otherwise. It needs to be revitalized. We tried last year

HOWARD: through a series of seminars. I think the fact that I'm a short-timer -- just six months down the road to retirement -- has caused me to slack off a little. It's alive. It's well. It's not nearly as well as it could be.

WBP: Now, this seems to be also a way of stimulating initiative at the grass roots, so to speak, in the library and involving individuals who may be just brand new -- the staff members -- in decisions that are being formulated and in that sense could be revitalized, could be a constantly revitalizing . . . .

HOWARD: It's there now and all of the key groups meet [more or less] regularly and do make decisions, do exchange information. So I'm satisfied with it, although I recognize its weaknesses.

WBP: Do any of them take minutes at their meetings?

HOWARD: Yes. Yes. We call them reports.

WBP: Reports.

HOWARD: Yeah, as to what has happened.

WBP: Who have been the most valuable people in helping you to bring about changes that you wanted to bring on? Staff members who have been of great assistance to you?

HOWARD: It's hard to single out any. We have two who are retired that were keys in the development: Irene McDonough, who wrote the history of the library after she retired, and Frances Boyd, who was head of adult services and in chain of command was No. 3. Certainly, Betty Martin, who was acting director when I came here, is assistant director. It's more a collection. Some have been more central than others. But any long-time staff member has had considerable input and must be given a lot of credit. Jessie Hord, for example, our reference librarian who is nearing retirement now. Non-professionals, many of them who have been in key positions over the years.

WBP: Are there any kinds of issues that are taboo at orbit meetings? Can they talk about, for instance, salaries and . . .

HOWARD: There is nothing that is taboo in the orbit meeting. People are naturally reluctant to bring up sensitive issues. The only taboo would be set in the ground rules for the orbits or groups and that is that you speak to the matter under discussion. Individuals don't speak to individuals; you speak to the matter under discussion. And we have to recognize that if a group is really working well, there is an ideal that lifts it up and allows that group to become a single entity, a single organism, that makes it different than just a collection of people meeting together and that you have to strive for as much equality as is possible among individuals who have their own idiosyncrasies, different positions, different ability . . .

DN: You might mention how COCOM works.

WBP: About what?

HOWARD: The central orbit, the administrative orbit -- the one that ties it all together -- was initially called the executive committee and now is called the coordinating committee. The coordinating committee has worked as near to perfection over these 12 years that it's been in existence as any group could possibly work. In it, there are really no holds barred. We have run the gamut over our years of tears, hurt feelings, people walking out -- it's the sign of a healthy group. I myself have walked out, furious, gone home, swore I was never coming back. A very healthy group. I came back.

WBP: Why did the . . . in May, 1969, you met with the combined school board and library board and apparently at that time you did not see the need for a separate library board. Is that correct?

HOWARD: Yes. The school board at that time was very good to work with because they had a lot of power. It was a powerful group. It was an elected group. I would rather work with an elected body -- again speaking ideally -- than an appointed body. That was part of what brought about that statement. Also, the school board was busy operating the school corporation and didn't have time or the inclination or the energy to nitpick, as a separate board sometimes can do. And so they didn't worry about little details. They permitted me to be innovative, to make

HOWARD: changes, and so we were able to make a lot of the changes that were made under the school board and I was afraid we could not under an appointed group.

WBP: All right. So then . . . but later on there had to be a separate library board. How did that happen?

HOWARD: The bonding authority for the State of Indiana had said they would not approve bonds for a school board library. Initially, back in the 1800s, most of the libraries in the state of Indiana were formed under the authority of school cities or school boards. Over the years and especially following a new public library law in 1947, the libraries split off from schools and became independent entities. Since we were pretty well along in our planning for a new library at that time, with the election of May, 1974, came four people who voted -- and maybe the others did, too . . . I don't remember the vote, but those four who were elected were committed to divesting themselves of control of the library and then causing a separate board to be formed which could then, if the community desired, through the regular administrative procedures, build a new library.

WBP: O.K. Would you say that was the biggest obstacle that you had to overcome to get a new library?

HOWARD: It was one obstacle . . . it was . . . it was the only obstacle really. It was the only obstacle.

WBP: In other words, the necessary legal apparatus was then in place so that you could get the bonding necessary?

HOWARD: There were other things that had to be done, but they could be done. However, we couldn't sell bonds as long as we were a school board library. That was the one thing that we had to do.

WBP: Did you have support -- pretty wide support -- in the community as soon as you came for a new library?

HOWARD: No. the support had to be developed.

WBP: You had . . .



HOWARD: The support had to be developed and even now you still hear questions, "Well, why did you need a new library? They had a big library down at Indiana State University. Why do you need a public library?" No. There are still many people who raise the question, either from lack of understanding or just a belief that they have hung onto that the old Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library building was enough for the community.

WBP: How'd you go about developing that support?

HOWARD: First was visibility. The library had to be visible in the community, and we did that in a variety of ways. The news media here until just recently was probably the finest in terms of working with the library of any in the world. And we just had all kinds of help from the news media. So, they became our allies in disseminating information, ideas, raising questions, as far as the community [was concerned], through personal contacts that I and other members of the staff made. Visibility, a new image, an image of something that was different than the Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library was, creating a new image -- the Vigo County Public Library -- one that was in effect shaped by the citizen taxpayers, the adult citizens of the community, one that was interested in meeting their needs, their interests whatever they might be, through the various groups that they belong to, whose activities they participated in. It was one of trying to reshape the community information center to a community information system that would be modified by the users of the system and the owners of the system -- all the taxpayers -- as we went along. It was . . . also required questionnaires of the people that made them think about their library. How do you use it? Here are ways that you could use it. Which ones do you? Like someone told me, he said, "I didn't know you had phonograph records down there." Like a state representative who became aware, after we called him [to say] that we were looking at a film on land reclamation following strip mining [and] wanted to know if he was interested. He was. He became aware for the first time that we had films. And every Friday afternoon thereafter for countless weeks [he] came by, borrowed a projector, screen and a stack of films and went through our entire collection for

HOWARD: his family, his neighborhood, for his own education. It was something he enjoyed doing over the week-end.

It was . . . and I would hear from people, "Gee, I didn't know that you could call the library and get information like that." So, arousing the interest of the community, creating awareness, creating a new image, constant exchange of information both through staff members, through the media, through our own publications.

WBP: Were there any outspoken opponents of the library that really slowed things down? Perhaps even behind the scenes?

HOWARD: There always is. There was not a unified group. In another city for example, the realtors and the chamber of commerce and I think probably the news media have over the past years joined forces to prevent a new library from being built. Here we did not have that.

DN: It's my understanding that one of the reasons that Stillman Taylor, the former director, left is because he could not get community support for a new building. Now, you personally had to get involved in order to get the support.

HOWARD: Stillman was here 13 years and he did a marvelous job. If you look back through the publicity and the minutes of the board meetings at what he accomplished, he changed it from a city system to a county system; he established the branch libraries; he established the bookmobiles; he got the AV -- got us into audio-visual materials -- and so had taken it as far as Stillman felt like taking it.

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 2-SIDE 2

WBP: Basically, you're saying that there were no organized groups opposing the new library. There were some individuals perhaps? Do you want to mention . . . are there any names of people that were particularly opposed to it?

HOWARD: No. I don't know of any. But again, for a project of this magnitude it was a matter of asking the people what they wanted, of helping the people decide whether they wanted it or not. And I think that much of what we have accomplished here has been due to an openness on the part of . . . and this was a little bit difficult for the school board. I remember when we were talking about the "help plan the new library" phase in the first few months of 1972 as we were finishing our building program statement.

See, all the planning here has taken a long time. It took one year to write what's called the building program statement, which is just a written narrative of the things that a new building is to accomplish -- what its various spaces are to do -- so that an architect can take this and translate that into line drawings, into schematics, into the structural details. It took one year to do that. And in the last six months of that, which turned out to be the first three months I believe of 1972, we turned to the people. And we said it positively, "Help us plan the new library." We didn't ask, "Do you want a new library?" But in so doing in [the campaign entitled:] "Help us plan the new library," we invited both on a one-to-one basis, on a staff member-to-group basis, through the news media -- coupons in the newspapers -- through letters, through forms that we handed out to groups, had at all our branches, through the assistant director, I, and the architect . . . setting up a card table over in city hall, in the courthouse, in the library, in Honey Creek shopping center, we invited all kinds of comment on the operation of the library, the pro, the con, the good, the bad, whatever. And so, it opened it.

This was a little bit difficult for the school board because the school board by nature does not work that way. And I think probably it cannot work that way because there's nothing as controversial as some decision that the school board makes as to the location of a new school or whatever. And to open it to the total community is probably beyond the ability of a school administration and a school board to deal with. In the library's case, it wasn't. And the community was ready also and responded magnificently. Not everyone was for it. But most of the people were, as it turned out.

HOWARD: And then a few years later when we did the petitions, we had some 1600, 1700 signatures of property owners who said yes, we want our taxes raised so we can have a new facility.

WBP: Were there some people who helped you -- individuals who were fairly influential in the community who helped you -- get this accomplished?

HOWARD: The one that must be singled out for credit is the League of Women Voters. There was another obstacle, I guess you could call it. The one that I didn't see as being a major obstacle and that was that the bonding authority also said look back in 1960 when you became a county system, you did so along with the school corporation (because that's when they went to a single-unit school corporation for the county and the library went right along with it). The library has a different procedure that it must follow in order to annex the entire county for service. And so the only way that we can forgive that administrative oversight is to have a court decision which says that this is legally the Vigo County Public Library.

So, the League of Women Voters and a committee chaired by Alice Kieweg in some awfully bad weather as I remember -- snow and ice and sleet -- raised the money from . . . through the efforts of the League, from local individuals and businesses to pay for a rather expensive court case where the League, on behalf of the citizens of the county [in] a class action suit, brought suit that we were not operating legally. And the Superior Court here said yes, they are because they've been levying taxes. What they did in 1960 may have not followed the procedure at the time, but they did it. Nobody protested. They've been levying taxes here all these years; therefore it is legally the Vigo County Public Library.

That done, then we were off and running. So, the League of Womer Voters . . .

WBP: Alice Kieweg.

HOWARD: And Alice Kieweg.

WBP: Were there any donors in that that deserve mention?

HOWARD: I don't know who the donors were. I never asked.

WBP: How was the location of the public library decided? How did you determine it to be downtown?

HOWARD: The center of population . . . well, first, at the time we were considering purchasing this site, which we did in May, 1970, just prior to that we asked the people in the community to rate four different available sites. We again used the news media. It wasn't as full scale as "help plan the new library." We called on organizations such as H.E.L.P., League of Women Voters, [and] others to give us their vote, in effect, on it. And we had four available sites. One was where Wabash Federal Savings and Loan is now. Another one was down by the "Y" [in Wabash Avenue] near the courthouse. One was near Montgomery Ward -- or where Montgomery Ward is now. I think it's the one where Montgomery Ward [on South 3rd Street] is now, over there somewhere anyway on the other side of 3rd Street. And the fourth site was this one [where Wiley High School was]. When it was all brought together, this was the ideal site. One of the things which influenced that decision was the fact that the center of population at that time in Vigo County was at 13th and Walnut. This library is now at 7th and Walnut which means it's only six blocks away from the center of population. To me that was important. And when we made that known, it seemed to meet the approval of a lot of people.

WBP: That's interesting because it runs counter to all the trends that were beginning about that time for the city's retailing to move outside the city limits and . . .

HOWARD: True. True. Everything that we have done we have tried to do systematically, rationally, logically, which sometimes runs counter to the political processes. One of the things we tried to do was to adapt the planning, programming, budgeting system -- PPBS -- which is a highly sophisticated way of determining priorities or choices through various alternatives of your input dollars based on your output of the information system using cost-benefit analysis.

HOWARD: Well, it proved that . . . to be unworkable. In terms of a public library you cannot determine the benefits of information in the hands of the user. And so there's just no way to do pure cost-benefit analysis. However, we did adapt from that output measurement. And so we have for the past 10 years . . . and, of course, Darlene Norman has been very, very involved in that in recent years. In fact, we co-authored an article on it published in Library Journal recently. We have evolved an output measurement system which injects then some factual information into decision-making. PPBS failed largely because of the difficulty of cost-benefit analysis but also because it ignores the political process. If you lay things out rationally and say, all right, here's the benefit of this, here's the benefit of this one; here are the advantages, the disadvantages, you can arrive at an objective decision for most things which would say this is the better choice of two, or the best of the three or four -- such as this site, for example.

But the political process is quite different. And it's on the basis of payoffs and power and votes and jobs and all sorts of things. And so PPBS failed nationally because of the fact that it operated outside of the political process.

WBP: But you're not saying that this library is going to fail because . . .

HOWARD: No. What I'm saying is that we utilized an examination of choices internally and with the community to an extent that helped the final choice to be the best one.

WBP: Right.

HOWARD: Rationally.

WBP: So you actually tried to determine what politics or public opinion wanted here?

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: What the people . . .

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: . . . where they wanted the library.

HOWARD: Yes. To involve, insofar as we could, the entire community in decision-making, which is an interesting way to go. I think it's the only way to go. It also requires someone with tremendous energy. At this point in my life, I'm tired. And I can't do it today. I can't do it.

WBP: You're constantly mounting a campaign. You have to . . . because you have to . . . to get everybody involved this takes a lot of . . . a lot of effort, a willingness for people to cooperate with each other.

HOWARD: And you have to be active in all types of community groups because that's where the communication is. That's where people will tell you what they actually think.

WBP: When you're at the Rotary Club at noon and . . .

HOWARD: Yes.

WBP: . . . they can talk to you because they see you there.

HOWARD: Yeah. They'll say, "That's the dumbest idea I ever heard." You'll say, "Why?" [They'll respond,] "Well, because it's so-and-so."

WBP: They won't call you up and make an appointment to tell you that.

HOWARD: No. No. Otherwise, you'll never know.

WBP: Yeah, you have . . .

HOWARD: Otherwise, you'll never know.

WBP: It seems to me this library is an enormous success. And, no doubt, the users' records, I mean the statistics you have on the amount of usage shows great growth, don't you? Is that . . .

HOWARD: Yes. That's true.

WBP: Growth in the amount of use. And in that sense it's been an anchor of life in the downtown area when many, many organizations, business organizations are moving out.

WBP: Have you seen during . . .

HOWARD: Let me interrupt you just a minute.

That was another factor in our decision. And I have to commend the library . . . the school board, then the library board, for accepting as one of the things that caused us to arrive at the decision that this would anchor a part of downtown. Now, I think that's being very objective. I think that's very community-minded to do that -- to say, all right, it's going to cost us a little more since we'll have to clear it [demolish the old school buildings], than it would to get a piece of ground from Urban Renewal area; to say that it's also important in terms of this community that there be an expensive facility right here today.

WBP: There was no way that you could adapt an old building to re-use to house this library facility?

HOWARD: No.

WBP: No way because of the things that were needed -- the different spaces that were needed. And you also had it in mind to have it as a community center as well, not just a library.

HOWARD: This is what the people said. We learned so much from "help plan the new library," that they wanted it to be a kind of a hub of the community. They wanted it to be a place that people could meet. They wanted it to be a center both symbolically and physically. They wanted it to be a place where the handicapped would have easy access, where there would be adequate parking. And they liked the downtown idea.

WBP: Were you able to carry out all their desires?

HOWARD: No. No. One that we gave up on was called a canteen -- a canteen area -- where there would be vending machines. We'd probably have video games in there today, a separate area. It would be acoustically isolated. And as one person whose opinion I respected said, "It should be open 24 hours a day."



WBP: Good for them.

Were your feelings . . . maybe I should say, were the desires of the staff realized in their entirety?

HOWARD: No more than the community's in its entirety, no. No more than mine.

WBP: Were there major disappointments that you felt in the actual facility?

HOWARD: No.

WBP: No major ones. Minor ones?

HOWARD: No. Not even . . . I'm satisfied with it. I'm very satisfied with it. Things that I really fought for, we got. For example, it's a completely wired library. That was important -- to wire it. Probably 10 years from now, 20 years from now, that wiring will be totally used. Today, it is not. But that was for the future. It is used now but not to the extent I foresee it being used. All of the sloping concrete surfaces outside have heating mats in them. That was important.

WBP: Yes.

HOWARD: That was important. And has proved to be. Well, that I fought for. So there were some things that I fought for.

WBP: You've been able to see Terre Haute close up now, because you had to get into the middle of the community in order to, in a way, sell this new facility and to find out what the community wanted in a new facility. What changes did you see in people's attitudes in this community during the period, say from 1970 to the present?

HOWARD: I think there is much more openness now than there was 13 years ago. Or at least there was until the last couple of years. There's a change taking place in Terre Haute now that I don't like, that bothers me very much. The news media has almost collapsed in terms at least of its newspapers. There's a bitter strike there that has really hurt this community. The newspapers are nothing like

HOWARD: they used to be. And I think that's going to have a very harmful effect upon Terre Haute. There's much less openness now in its community life, in its decision-making than there was in the past.

I think we probably reached our peak in terms of the willingness of people to work together for the community weal. Isn't that what they call it -- the community weal?

WBP: Maybe. Yeah, commonweal!

HOWARD: Commonweal! Yeah. For the commonweal, oh, 1977-78, somewhere in there. We've lost some good people in this community. The loss of Tony Hulman could have been a boon to the community in that it would have forced it to make some decisions that in the past they had avoided because of the cloud of Tony that hung over the city. And people were hesitant, people at least covered themselves with "Well, I don't know what Tony would want." "If it should be done, well, let Tony do it." "Why doesn't he go ahead and do this?" [There was] a waiting, a lack of action that was blamed wrongly on Tony Hulman. Tony wasn't an activist. And this community failed to act many times because they either relied on him or excused their inaction because of him. So the community should have come alive more after his death. I thought it was going to, but I don't know.

It's lost some good people. One I would want to name would be Golby Uhler, the attorney who was the head of the city Department of Redevelopment, a tremendous individual that made a contribution to this community far greater than we will ever realize in times when there were racial troubles there, who helped to keep the community together. So, we've lost some good people because they're leaving for other places. We have lost some important people through their death -- Forrest Sherer for example. [A] change in attitudes.

Of course, there's a change in our country now, a conservatism, a longing that may be realized to return to local autonomy, states' rights and all that. It's going to be much more restrictive. We don't have the largess of the federal government any more to rely upon.

WBP: Is there more of a sense of community? Is it . . . would you . . . I use the word of "sense of community" in a sense that when you came here you were talking about a community and what a public library could do for it. And one of those things was, I think you said, /to/ create a more tangible sense of community.

HOWARD: Yes. That, I think, is still on the upswing because I've seen in the last five, six years perhaps, just in recent years, an expression . . . a willingness to express pride in the city of Terre Haute that wasn't here before. It no longer seems to be popular to knock Terre Haute as it was. And even among the young people that I know, I find that they're willing to stick up for Terre Haute. So, I think that's still on the upswing.

I think the creation of the Department of Recreation and Tourism or whatever this is called here is going to help. Groups have tried. The Jaycees and their slogan, "Pride City." They've tried valiantly over the years, but they did not have enough support. Part of it is due to our interest in genealogy that's bloomed in recent years, our search for our roots, our pride in our ancestry which has made us a little more respectful of our own community.

But I think probably that's on the upswing.

WBP: Terre Haute hasn't boomed then as you thought it might.

HOWARD: No, not economically. Maybe that's all for the good though.

WBP: You mentioned this cloud of Tony. Do you think that had something to do with the failure of it to boom economically?

HOWARD: Oh, definitely! Definitely.

WBP: Explain.

HOWARD: In the circles I traveled in, I think people quite often felt that they shouldn't suggest large projects on their own. /They felt/ that if it was a large project, it should be a Hulman undertaking. And there was always a feeling that there was a power

HOWARD: block over there that may land on you, may crush you if you get out of line. Or what I think was the predominant feeling and that is, "Well, if it needs to be done, Tony will do it." Or, "We'll let him do it. We'll just go on as we are."

WBP: Have the banks ever been outspoken in their advocacy of some project?

HOWARD: The banks are not unified. If they were to unify, they could be a very powerful force in the community. But they're not unified. They can exert pressure and sometimes do; but they're not a key force in the community.

WBP: What about industry?

HOWARD: (sigh) Again, the same thing. The Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce has, under Ross Hedges, done more to develop a voice of industry than anything that's been done here in my time. Industry can make a project or break a project, sometimes. But again, it is not a unified force.

But you add all these together. You add the banks, you add the news media, you add the taxpayers' association, the senior citizens, the Jaycees, the League of Women Voters, the Rotary Club, the various industries, and there are groups . . . I have learned there are groups that meet here that you do not know anything about, that you never hear about. I used to think that all of the groups were in the news media. They are not. There is for example, a probably monthly -- it was the last I knew -- meeting of industry managers here.

WBP: Here at the library?

HOWARD: No. I mean in the community.

And so they do get together occasionally. What role they play I do not know.

WBP: Well, this is . . .

DN: I have a question that I want to ask Ed. You've had some failures, but they have turned out to be successes. For instance, the car -- the railroad car. Do you want to tell us about that?

HOWARD: It was a beautiful idea but one in the makeup of it that was most untimely. A railroad company that was willing to donate a railroad car, a Chamber of Commerce that was willing to back it. Labor organizations and other community organizations, a large number of them, that were willing to help in a variety of ways /to/ create out of an old railroad car -- which meant one thing to me in terms of memory and symbolism -- to create a young people's library in the Hyte Center area, one that would be run -- and that was one of the unique things about it -- that would be run entirely by young people from the Hyte Center area. And I think it was the largest -- next to this library -- the largest project I ever took on. I didn't realize when I got it started how many people, how many organizations, would get involved and how much of my time it would take. It required no . . . we had no money whatsoever. Everything we needed in terms of labor and materials was being donated. We were even publishing a newsletter with a mailing list of well over a hundred. And I'd published a third issue by the time that the railroad car was moved in and was seen so differently -- I guess seen for what it really was which was kind of junky -- by some of the older young people in the Hyte Center area.

And here was something that they physically could attack. It was everything that they had been fighting against. It was a castoff. It was rundown. It was, in their eyes -- I think rightly; I don't quarrel with them -- a piece of junk. It wasn't enough! It wasn't big enough. I couldn't disagree.

But anyway, in May then of 19-- . . . let's see. This started in '68 . . . in May of 1969 for one week there were meetings in the Hyte Center area. The town was very tense. And I was right in the center (commences to laugh) of something that could have caused the community to split wide open, bombings, burnings, you name it! Because there were racial confrontations about the country then. It had the makings of something that could be on the Walter Cronkite evening news. But we just dissolved the project and . . .

DN: Maybe you should describe the project. People listening may not realize just what you wanted to do with the railroad car.

HOWARD: Well, the railroad car was going to be refurbished into a young people's library with donated magazine subscriptions. And the subscriptions were being chosen by the 20 young people, I believe, from the Hyte Center area. It would be staffed by neighborhood youth corps workers. NYC, neighborhood youth corps, I believe at that time was the program. And, of course, materials would be loaned. The library could treat it just like a branch library and could supply all the materials. And that was the idea behind it -- a library for them run by them, whoever the "them" was in the Hyte Center area.

WBP: Sure. The Hyte Center area being a black area -- or one of the black areas . . .

HOWARD: Predominantly, yes. Um hm.

WBP: . . . and so this was . . . took place right in the middle of LBJ's President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society programs and . . .

HOWARD: Um hm.

WBP: . . . and also the ghetto burnings, the starting of Watts riots in Los Angeles and going to most of the cities in . . .

HOWARD: Detroit. Um hm.

WBP: This is the year after Martin Luther King was assassinated and Bobby Kennedy. I can see the fright that you might have felt there. But was this also . . . would you feel that this expressed years perhaps of pent-up resentment in the black community against the . . .

HOWARD: Oh, absolutely! Absolutely! As the leaders told me. They said, "We've had nothing but hand-me-downs, castoffs." They said, "Some of us live in little old shacks that were built for railroad workers." And . . . oh, absolutely.

WBP: It wasn't glamorous or nostalgic to them.

HOWARD: Nope.

DN: But something good came out of this project, though.

HOWARD: Yes. So we abandoned the project. And, of course, the irony of it was that the school board -- rightly or wrongly -- wouldn't permit me to spend any tax money; namely, \$2,000 to get rid of the old railroad car. And so that albatross around my neck sat down there for a long time. And I finally got a person in the community who would take it for salvage and, I know, lost a lot of money on it. . . . to cut it up and move it out just, as I see it, as a personal favor to me. And also to get rid of it for the community. And so finally we got rid of it.

But then the thing that I knew couldn't be done, the people in the community raised \$250,000 and to that was added \$500,000 in federal funds to build the present Hyte Community Center, which is not without its problems but it's still a good addition to the city of Terre Haute.

WBP: So your idea of railroad car museum stirred up . . .

HOWARD: Railroad car library.

WBP: Railroad car library stirred up enough interest by the community so that something else . . .

HOWARD: Part of it was . . . the donations came out of necessity, also, because the community was aroused and something had to be done. So you're asked for (commences to laugh) a donation under such conditions, I suspect you'll say, "Yes, it's time. It's warranted. It makes sense to give some money to . . . ."

WBP: Was the group that stood up and said, "No, we don't want your hand-me down or we don't want this third-rate kind of library branch," was that an ad hoc group that came into existence kind of . . .

HOWARD: It was an ad hoc group. It was led by a student or students at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology.

WBP: At Rose-Hulman?

HOWARD: Uh-huh.

WBP: Blacks or white? It must . . .

HOWARD: Blacks.

WBP:           There are so few blacks that have ever gone to Rose-Hulman, I'm amazed. That's interesting.

DN:            But it did spark the building of Hyte Center.

HOWARD:        Yeah.

DN:            Which is interesting.

HOWARD:        Yes. Yes. Yes.

WBP:           Well, you also instituted in this library, before the new library even, the cancellation of fines, right?

HOWARD:        That was done on April Fool's Day of 1968, the first year I was here. And like many of the things that we have done, it was of interest to the library profession, nationally.

WBP:           Is this the first time that had been done, to your knowledge?

HOWARD:        A few places maybe had never had fines or they'd dabbled in it. The one popular thing that was done was a fine amnesty day. They would say, "All right. All you people out there who have overdue books, you can bring them back today and we'll forgive you," which to me was contrary. If you're going to have fines, then they must be enforced and there is no forgiveness. And we did an opinion poll. See, again, we asked the community. And we had little cards which read, "What is your opinion of doing away with fines -- strongly approve, mildly approve, no opinion, mildly disapprove, strongly disapprove." Everyone had strong feelings about it we discovered. Two-thirds of the respondents strongly approved; one-third didn't. And some of the comments -- we published an article on it -- some of the comments were priceless. Like one person said, "It enables me to save my honor" or little . . . from the heart comments. Grammatically, it sounded funny I remember. But just like "help plan the new library," some of them you'd look at and say, "Why that's silly." But it was something a person was feeling, so they shared part of themselves with you. And so in that experiment, even though a number of people were violently opposed to it -- and still are for that matter, although you hear less and less about



HOWARD: it -- but since we took the trouble to ask, well, people go along with it. They'd say, I know it's going to fail. You're not teaching . . . . You're -- what is it? -- harming the morals of the young, you know, that sort of thing. I think the community has accepted it now.

WBP: You have not had the experience of people coming in and taking books out of the library and selling them?

HOWARD: No more than we've had before. There's a certain loss that goes along with it. And I've been thankful that the majority, vast majority of the users, probably 99-1/2% . . .

WBP: Good.

HOWARD: . . . are . . . they accept the responsibility that is theirs when they borrow materials.

WBP: That's enough to restore one's faith in one's fellow man/.

HOWARD: We lend projectors that are worth \$800 or \$900 and have very few problems in the lending of them. We're one of the few institutions public libraries that lend projectors.

WBP: That's amazing. That tells you something. That's gratifying to hear about this community.

Ed, what else . . . what would you like to add to the tape here before we conclude?

HOWARD: Oh, I don't know, maybe something a little personal. A lot of people have asked me . . . or made the statement, said, "Well, you really feel proud now that this building is completed." Or, "You see this as a monument to you," or something. I don't have that feeling at all.

I'm very, very pleased that Terre Haute has this facility. I'm pleased that it's so well used. I'm pleased that the building is working well; that it's fulfilling the functions that it was designed

HOWARD: to do; that it is well constructed; that it is attractive. But I don't feel the personal kind of pride in it being here that a lot of people would expect apparently. I don't feel that at all. I . . . it's surprising even to me as I talk about it. But I see this as a community effort and something that the citizens of Vigo County should be proud of.

WBP: Um hm. Well, it certainly was a community building and it would not have been possible unless there was that sense. But you provided the catalyst. You came into this community and provided the inspiration, one could say . . .

HOWARD: Well, I hope so.

WBP: . . . and the coordination . . .

HOWARD: I hope so.

WBP: . . . so that the positive thinking, if you will, that brought it about. And you deserve a great deal of credit for that.

I think this has been a delightful interview, extremely informative, and thank you for letting us do it.

HOWARD: Thanks to you, Bill, and to Darlene.

END OF TAPE

/Howard then noted the vital role of the 1974-appointed library board in construction planning, sale of bonds, etc., and cited in particular the leadership of Arch Dunbar, board president, and the work of Ned Bush, board member./

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